

"SO I SANG THE SAME AGAIN": READING REVISION IN THE
NINETEENTH-CENTURY LONG POEM

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This study considers the practice of textual revision in Romantic and Victorian long poems that exist in multiple versions. Each of the long poems explored in this study is concerned with the growth of consciousness: Blake’s *Jerusalem* narrates a story about spiritual awakening through imaginative vision; Wordsworth’s *The Prelude* tells to its addressee, Coleridge, the story of the growth of the poet’s mind, particularly the restoration of imagination through memory; and Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* narrates the poet’s growing sense of solace as he struggles to come to terms with the death of a dear friend. Although different in each poem, revision is central to the stories these poems tell. They are not so much works, but workings—records of the continuous process of seeing (or singing) something again and recasting it in a new light. Building on the work of critics who have argued for the legitimacy of multiple textual versions (like Hans Zeller, Jerome McGann, and Jack Stillinger), this study takes the claims of textual pluralism a necessary step further in its attempts to read among versions, to interpret them diachronically and synchronically. Ultimately, I argue that the practice of textual revision is part of the meaning of that which is repeatedly revised. Recognizing Blake’s practice of abbreviating the narrative of contracted perception allows us to understand the last version, and see this process of revision as a figure for expansive

vision and revelation in the larger story. Reading Wordsworth's practice of reframing and removing references to Coleridge in *The Prelude* allows us to understand the significance of textual absence and its relationship to the growth of the poet's presence. Finally, considering Tennyson's practice of adding paired, or partner sections to published versions of *In Memoriam* allows us to understand the importance of revision, incorporation, and closure in the wake of loss. The Coda considers affinities between British and American nineteenth-century poetry in process by exploring "points of contact" between William Blake and Walt Whitman.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sarah Ferguson-Wagstaffe was in utero during the Indiana Repertory Theatre's production of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. She was born in 1975 to Priscilla Lindsay, an actor, director, artist, writer, activist, teacher, and birder, and Richard Ferguson-Wagstaffe, a scene designer, playwright, photographer, marketing director, gardener, and ship builder. Sarah attended Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, and graduated *summa cum laude* with a B.A. in English. She received her M.A. in English Language and Literature from Cornell University. After teaching writing and literature at Cornell University and a maximum-security prison in Auburn, NY, she moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to teach eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British Literature at the University of Pennsylvania. She currently teaches Expository Writing at Harvard University in Cambridge, MA.

For my parents, Richard and Priscilla

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In 1956 Northrop Frye identified a particularly striking feature of the literature written between the Augustan period (1660-1740) and the Romantic period (1789-1832): the “age of sensibility,” as he called it, was characterized by “an interest in the poetic process as distinct from the product.”¹ Augustan poetry, like Alexander Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock*, emphasizes poetry as product most clearly in its “regularly occurring metre” (Frye 146). For example, this mock-epic about courtship in the early eighteenth-century is written in heroic couplets that present observations and work together to form an argument:

With hairy springes we the birds betray,
Slight lines of hair surprise the finny prey,
Fair tresses man’s imperial race ensnare,
And beauty draws us with a single hair.

(*The Rape of the Lock* II.25-28)

The “hairy springes,” or snares, and the hair of a fishing line, trap birds and fish through betrayal and surprise. What seems elementary in the first couplet—that a fish never sees such a surprise coming—is applied to men in the second couplet, and the juxtaposition reveals a comparison between “man’s imperial race” and animals of prey. The same kind of trap, whether it is made by “Fair tresses” or “a single hair,” captivates and “ensnares” men. The

¹ Frye, “Towards Defining an Age of Sensibility” 144, 147. Though I focus exclusively on poetry in this chapter, Frye discusses eighteenth-century novels that also emphasize process, such as Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* and Richardson’s *Pamela*. The Romantic period is dated here from 1789, the start of the French Revolution; alternative start dates include 1785 (the year after Samuel Johnson’s death), and 1798 (the publication year for Wordsworth’s and Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads*).

comparison is both funny and true, or funny because Pope suggests it is true. It is also intellectually satisfying: once we decode the analogy, we understand the satirical argument. In addition to its intricate and regular structure, *The Rape of the Lock*'s textual history links it even more strongly to poetry as product. The first version of *The Rape of the Lock* consisted of two cantos (344 lines), and was published in 1712. Pope revised the poem in 1713 by adding several new parts, including the "delightful 'machinery' (i.e., the supernatural agents in epic action) of the Sylphs, Belinda's toilet, the card game, and the visit to the Cave of Spleen in canto 4"; and the addition of Clarissa's speech in 1717 brought this process of revision to a close.² In other words, Pope's process of revision was aimed at creating a finished product, and it only took about five years.

In contrast, Frye argues that poems like Christopher Smart's *Jubilate Agno* (1759-1763), or William Blake's lyrics (1780s), "delight in refrain for refrain's sake" (147). Blake's "Introduction" to *Songs of Innocence*, produced in 1789 on the cusp between the age of sensibility and the age of Romanticism, is indeed more repetitive than Pope's poem:

Piping down the valleys wild
Piping songs of pleasant glee
On a cloud I saw a child.
And he laughing said to me.

Pipe a song about a Lamb:
So I piped with merry chear,
Piper pipe that song again—
So I piped, he wept to hear.

Drop thy pipe thy happy pipe
Sing thy songs of happy chear,

² *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol. C, p. 2513; see also Puetzer, "The Rape's Progress, 1711-36: A Study of Pope's Revisions," *Thoth* 11.1 (1970): 3-15.

So I sung the same again
While he wept with joy to hear. (1-12)

Blake's "Introduction" tells the story of a process of creative expression instigated and perpetuated by inspiration (the child on a cloud). Here, repetition is deployed as part of a ballad structure that emphasizes sound and suspension (*abab* rhyme scheme), as opposed to an heroic couplet structure that emphasizes sense and completion (*aabb* rhyme scheme). This poetic song about a song uses repetition in both form and content to work toward an oral performance, rather than a witty argument. When we look at this poem's textual history, we find a significant emphasis on process. *Songs of Innocence* was first issued as a separate book in 1789, and issued together with *Songs of Experience* in 1794. Blake produced many different copies of *Songs of Innocence* throughout his lifetime, none of which is considered final.

Blake's method of producing illuminated poetry involved writing and drawing on small copper plates with pens and brushes using acid-resistant ink (in reverse because the plate image mirrors the printed image). He then wrapped the edges of the plate in wax and poured acid on the plate; the acid ate away the surface, leaving the text and images in relief; the plate was then inked, printed on paper, and washed in various watercolors. These poetic creations, which include both image and text, confront us with variation and difference: each copy of one of Blake's poems is distinct with respect to structure, text, design, and/or coloration. For example, although Blake etched the twenty-eight plates of *The Book of Urizen* in 1794, "only copies A and B contain them all"; and of all the copies Blake produced (six in 1794, one in 1795, and one in 1818), the full-page design pages are "differently positioned

in each copy.”³ In his essay on Blake’s production of the various copies of *The Book of Urizen*, John H. Jones asserts: “Blake’s ‘copies’ constitute eight different performances and restore to the mechanically reproduced text all the accidents and variation of oral presentation” (88). Here, Jones echoes G. E. Bentley’s earlier claim that “Each variant copy produced by Blake should be treated as a separate ‘performance,’ with its own integrity” (334). Blake’s performance of poetry in process emphasizes the essential unity of a poem’s repeatable and various poetic expressions. This kind of performativity also transfers authority to the audience: “The variations produced in each copy remove the exactitude, the finalization, of the printed work and undermine the authority that the exact duplication of printed texts provides” (Jones 74).⁴ The process of poetry is then extended in this way to include the reader: differences among copies allow readers to half-create meaning as they experience the multiple performances of one of Blake’s poems.

Blake, then, occupies a unique position as a poet of process and product. Though many poems written during the age of sensibility, like Young’s *Night Thoughts* or Akenside’s “The Pleasures of the Imagination,”

³ Blake, William. *The First Book of Urizen, The William Blake Archive*. Ed. Morris Eaves, Robert N. Essick, and Joseph Viscomi. 10 January 2007 <<http://www.blakearchive.org/>>. In Chapter Two I discuss scholars’ different opinions about whether variations are intentional changes, or unintentional consequences of Blake’s method of production. For example, is *The Book of Urizen*, copy G (1818) a revision of *The Book of Urizen*, copy A (1794) in the sense that Blake purposefully changed the former with respect to the latter? Or is copy G different from copy A because its impressions were printed fifteen years later, when Blake might have had access to different materials (paper, ink, etc.), or when his method of production had changed?

⁴ Emphasizing “textual and material reiteration in Blake’s work” as a “site for reunification of aesthetic and political-economic analysis,” Saree Makdisi argues that Blake’s rejection of conventional commercial practice of engraving an image whose copies are identical, or standardized, in his illuminations opens up the possibility of reading repetition in his works as a subversion of the “industrial logic of reproduction” that requires an original, from which identical copies are produced (*William Blake and the Impossible History of the 1790s* 181, 170).

emphasize process, sound, and repetition, their textual histories emphasize poetry as product: *Night Thoughts* was published in installments from 1742 to 1745, and “The Pleasures of Imagination” was published in 1744, and again in revised form in 1757.⁵ Blake’s works mark a shift from *poetry as process* that reaches a final stage of production, to *poetry in process* that is produced multiple times. Though Frye argues that Romantic poetry is characterized by a view of poetry as a “*product* of the creative imagination,” the textual history of many Romantic poems reveals them as essentially poetry in process (148). Like the Piper in “Introduction,” Blake’s practice of producing different versions of the same poem sets the stage for the dramatic expression of poetry in process in the nineteenth century.

A Brief History of Versions

Poetry in process, however, has not always been a legitimate part of literary study. In the mid-twentieth century, multiple versions were considered part of the textual critic’s domain, not the literary critic’s. One of the most influential editorial theories at this time was the Greg-Bowers copy text theory, first developed by W. W. Greg (“The Rationale of the Copy Text,” 1950), and further defined by Fredson Bowers and G. Thomas Tanselle.⁶ According to the

⁵ See Richard Terry’s discussion of poetry as process in the eighteenth century in “Transitions and Digressions in the Eighteenth-Century Long Poem,” *Studies in English Literature* 32.2 (1992): 497.

⁶ See W.W. Greg, “the Rationale of Copy-Text,” *Studies in Bibliography* 3 (1950-51): 19-36. Bowers widened the scope of Greg’s theory (which grew out of his work on Shakespeare) by applying it to the works of several authors: see *Textual and Literary Criticism* (1959), and *Bibliography and Textual Criticism* (1964). Tanselle’s essays on the importance of authorial intention in the editing process were particularly influential; for a collection of eight essays written between 1971 and 1983, especially “The Editorial Problem of Final Authorial Intention” (originally published in 1976), see Tanselle’s *Textual Criticism and Scholarly Editing* (1990). See also W. Speed Hill, “Theory and Practice in Anglo-American Scholarly Editing, 1950-2000,” *Anglia* 119.3 (2001): 327-350; Tanselle, *Textual Criticism since Greg, A Chronicle, 1950-2000* (2005); and Stillinger, *Coleridge and Textual Instability* 118-140.

Greg-Bowers theory, one “best” or “ideal” text should be produced in the case of multiple authoritative texts. The production of an ideal text obviated the need to study other versions: according to René Wellek and Austin Warren, “drafts, rejections, exclusions, and cuts” have no impact upon our reading of a literary product (*Theory of Literature* 91).⁷ Authorial intention, the guiding principle of this editorial practice called “eclectic editing,” became the subject of much debate. In his 1975 essay, “A New Approach to the Critical Constitution of Literary Texts,” Hans Zeller argues that while the Greg-Bowers theory applies to the construction of a missing text from “radiating texts . . . whose differences are exclusively errors caused by the process of transmission,” it does not apply to a text constructed from versions that differ due to authorial intention (236). Moreover, the Greg-Bowers preference for an author’s final version is based on the assumption that “the alterations made by the author are isolated improvements within a concept which remains constant”; in other words, revision is either a process of improvement or evolution (241, 242-243). According to Zeller, authorial intentions (insofar as they can be known) should be treated “not as binding directives or editorial decisions, but as historical phenomena” (243). Ultimately, he argued that “texts with authorial variation” are legitimate versions (236).

Like Zeller in the 1970s, Jerome McGann and Stephen Parrish in the 1980s also rejected the Greg-Bowers copy-text theory of producing an ideal text based on final authorial intention, and advocated the authority of multiple textual versions.⁸ Jerome McGann’s *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism*

⁷ Qtd. in Van Vliet, “Compositional History as a Key,” *TEXT* 16 (2006): 75.

⁸ For others who rejected the Greg-Bowers theory, see Thorpe, “The Aesthetics of Textual Criticism” (1965) and *Principles of Textual Criticism* (1972); McLaverty, “The Concept of Authorial Intention in Textual Criticism” (1984); and Hans Walter Gabler “The Synchrony and

(1983) challenged textual and literary critics to rethink the way they define a text. Drawing on his experience of editing Byron's works, he argued that a literary text is "fundamentally social rather than personal or psychological," and authorial intention should be no more or less important than the material and institutional conditions which produced it (*Critique* 44). Authorial intention, McGann explains, is often based on "a number of different wishes and intentions about what text [an author] wanted to be presented to the public . . . [and] these differences reflect accommodations to changed circumstances, and sometimes to changed publics" (*Critique* 32). Zeller's categories of a text's history—its emergence and alteration (by the author), its influence and reception, and its transmission—are, for McGann, both "interdependent" and fluid (243-244). In order to "study texts and textualities," McGann asserts, "we have to study these complex (and open-ended) histories of textual change and variance" (*The Textual Condition* 9).⁹ While McGann redefined what constitutes a text and placed authorial intention within the larger context of social and material conditions, Stephen Parrish questioned our ability to know an author's intention, let alone use it as a guiding editorial principle. In "The Whig Interpretation of Literature" (1988), Parrish argues that if "language is prior to thought," then "intention becomes not only elusive and illusory, but irrelevant" because the "poet's 'intentions' at any stage of his work, let alone his 'final intentions,' are impossible to measure: they are revealed only in the language which presumably embodies them" (345). Some textual critics would disagree with Parrish and claim that authorial intention is "at least helpful in

Diachrony of Texts: Practice and Theory of the Critical Edition of James Joyce's *Ulysses*" (1981).

⁹ See also McGann's "The Monks and the Giants: Textual and Bibliographical Studies and the Interpretation of Literary Works," *Textual Criticism and Literary Interpretations* 180-99.

locating what belongs to a text and what not" (Lernout 84), and in literary circles, authorial intention is often used as evidence for an argument about the definitiveness of one version over another. When we subordinate earlier versions to a final version, when we view early versions as part of what Parrish calls an "inevitably evolving design," we relegate early versions to an ancillary status and promote the final version to a position of privilege (345). The final version of a revised poem is often not the product of a carefully conceived plan, as Jonathan Wordsworth reminds us: "the structure of *The Prelude*, as published in fourteen books in 1850, would point to intentions that Wordsworth could not have dreamed of in 1798" (*Romantic Revisions* 23). Parrish ultimately advocates textual pluralism, and argues that we should recognize the "autonomy and the validity of each steady state of the text as it changes in confused, unpredictable ways, through patterns which the author may never have foreseen, let alone 'intended'" (349).

Over the last several decades, multiple textual versions have gained legitimacy, but not popularity. When faced with multiple versions of a text, what do literary critics do with them? From the textual critic's point of view, we do not do enough. In the most recent volume of *TEXT: An Interdisciplinary Annual of Textual Studies* (2006), Peter L. Shillingsburg writes,

Multiple texts—fulfilling multiple intentions or standing as witnesses to multiple historical moments or to multiple social and commercial agreements—have generally displaced the pursuit of a single best or corrected text. Most of the discussion of the last twenty years has been devoted to these changes and to their accommodation to the new medium of electronic presentation. But what textual criticism has not done either well or ill is to develop the principles and practices of the interpretive consequences of its findings. (63)

Working from the premise that textual critics could do more to encourage literary critics to make use of multiple versions, Shillingsburg asked five authors “to explore the interpretive consequences of their own editorial work” (64). These essays written by advocates and producers of multiple versions focus on different kinds of texts (Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*, Beckett’s *Stirrings Still*, as well as Bach’s works), and attempt to show how elements of a text’s history (like compositional history and annotations) contribute to its meaning. The fact that these essays were specifically solicited, and that they generally call for more “inspiring interpretive essay[s] about the significance of variants” in scholarly editions, is evidence that literary critics are generally ignoring multiple textual versions in their work (Van Vliet 78).¹⁰

When literary critics engage with multiple textual versions, they typically do one of three things: discuss the implications of editorial theory, make arguments about why a poet revised in a particular way, or evaluate versions. A few essay collections published in the 1990s focused on intersections between editorial and literary theory.¹¹ The general premise of many of these essays is more practical than theoretical: the form of a text affects its interpretation. Specific suggestions for producing multiple textual versions have come from Donald Reiman, who suggests “versioning”—“presenting a version of a text unfettered by justifications of its definitive, or ideal, status”—and Robert Brinkley and Keith Hanley, who suggest the variorum—a “genetic

¹⁰ Shillingsburg remarks that the results of an NEH study of “the usage of scholarly editions in classrooms and criticism” in the 1970s “were so dismal, the report was suppressed”; and he mentions a survey of Hardy criticism conducted in 1998, ten years after a scholarly edition of *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* was published by Gatrell and Grindle, which found that “less than 5% of the essays on Hardy’s *Tess* mentioned or used the scholarly edition” (64).

¹¹ See *Devils and Angels: Textual Editing and Literary Theory* (1991), *Palimpsest: Editorial Theory in the Humanities* (1993), *Textualterity: Art, Theory, and Textual Criticism* (1995), and *Texts and Textuality: Textual Instability, Theory, and Interpretation* (1997).

or synoptic display of the full compositional process for the poems... [that] makes it possible for different readers to choose (or edit) different texts on the basis of their own decisions" (4-5).¹² That Brinkley and Hanley go on to claim, "from an aesthetic perspective this means that *the* poem has been displaced by its many versions," suggests that we haven't quite embraced the idea that a poem is constituted by its various versions; there is still a lingering sense of loss when we don't have access to one, ideal text (5). Jack Stillinger has one foot planted in the world of textual criticism, and the other planted in the world of literary criticism: he produces and interprets multiple textual versions. In *Coleridge and Textual Instability* (1994), Stillinger provides us with access to the multiple versions of Coleridge's canonical poems, and ultimately insists that "every individual version of a work is a distinct text in its own right" (121).¹³ In terms of literary interpretation, Stillinger suggests that multiple textual versions of poems Coleridge had written by 1798 "can be connected to form layers" of a textual history that might help us understand things like poetic influence, or the origins of a poetic genre: "Such an array" of versions, Stillinger argues, "is a far more accurate representation of the state of Coleridge's best poetry just before Wordsworth wrote *Tintern Abbey* in the summer of 1798, and presumably is more useful as a background for discussion of such topics as Coleridge's influence on Wordsworth and Coleridge's development of the blank-verse meditation that marks the beginning of what we now admire as the so-called greater Romantic lyric"

¹² Reiman, *Romantic Texts and Contexts* 167-180; Brinkley and Hanley, *Romantic Revisions* 4-5. Genetic criticism makes available "avant-textes"—materials like notes, drafts, manuscripts, and other documents that allow a reader to analyze the writing process. See Ferrer, "Production, Invention, and Reproduction: Genetic vs. Textual Criticism" (2002).

¹³ Stillinger includes the many different versions of Coleridge's "The Eolian Harp," "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," "Frost at Midnight," "The Ancient Mariner," "Kubla Kahn," "Christabel," and "Dejection: An Ode."

(139).¹⁴ But such discussions of multiple textual versions have remained in the background of literary interpretation.

If we look at interpretations that foreground multiple textual versions, we find that they often focus on evaluation, or making sense of the reasons behind a poet's final revisions. For example, in "Fluttering on the Grate: Revision in 'Frost at Midnight'" (2004) Matthew Van Winkle argues that the later, 1829 version of Coleridge's poem "offers a more generous vision of the bond between fathers and sons," and that, "forced to choose," he would prefer this version over other versions because it is "better" (595, 597). In her reading of Shelley's revision of *Epipsychidion* (2002), Nancy Moore Goslee suggests that we "imagine . . . we are the author, proposing alternate drafts, re-reading and choosing one metaphor, one word, one lyric or narrative trajectory over another," keeping in mind the final intentions of the author (738). According to Goslee, we should imagine that we are both textual critic and author: the process of revision then gives us "clues to the meanings of figures and formal patterns in the final text" (738). What these kinds of interpretations fail to take into account is the very thing textual pluralists have argued for—the legitimacy of all versions. Working from such a premise, how might we interpret multiple textual versions? How might we read poetry in process?

Reading Blake's Contraction and Expansion

One way to look at Blake's poetry in process is to explore his practice of textual revision. After Robert Blake's death in 1787, Blake inherited his brother's notebook, which Blake wrote and drew in for most of his life. The

¹⁴ Stillinger also presents multiple interpretations of the multiple versions of a Keats poem in "Fifty-nine ways of Looking at *The Eve of St. Agnes*," *Reading The Eve of St. Agnes* (1999).

notebook contains a crowded collection of Robert's drawings and Blake's sketches, drafts of essays, and drafts of a few poems (like "The Tyger" from *Songs of Experience*), often written over images or upside down.¹⁵ Because so few of Blake's poems exist in manuscript form, his etched plates essentially function as manuscripts that were revised through the process of printing, coloring, and arranging. "In most copies of Blake's works in Illuminated Printing," as G. E. Bentley confirms, "the text itself is invariable" (329).¹⁶ Perhaps this is why we are drawn to study other Romantic poets' practices of textual revision. In the Preface to *Revision and Romantic Authorship* (1996), Zachary Leader briefly points out that his interest in the "topic of revision" began with his work on Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, but Blake does not figure in his study, which focuses on revision in terms of personal identity and authorial autonomy in Wordsworth, Byron, Coleridge, Mary Shelley, John Clare, and Keats (vii). Essays collected in *Romantic Revisions* (1992) focus on revision in Wordsworth, Coleridge, Dorothy Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Leigh Hunt, Mary Shelley, Keats, and Clare, but not Blake. Likewise, Donald Reiman's *Romantic Texts and Contexts* (1987) includes chapters on revision in Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats (as well as Lamb and Browning), but not Blake (117-123).¹⁷

¹⁵ See *The Notebook of William Blake: A Photographic and Typographic Facsimile* (1977).

¹⁶ There is evidence that Blake made a minor alteration to the text of a plate after etching *Jerusalem*: copy 3 bears the marks of Blake's fraught relationship to his readers, or possibly one (potential) reader. "At some point, Blake attacked the copper plate, gouging out words and entire passages that suggested intimacy with the reader" (Paley, *Introduction, The Illuminated Books* Vol. I, 11).

¹⁷ A discussion of an editor of Blake's poems (David V. Erdman) substitutes for a discussion of textual revision in Blake's poetry.

In order to examine Blake's process of textual revision, we must widen the scope of our inquiry. When we consider textual revision among Blake's poems (instead of within Blake's poems), we find that he rehearsed different versions of the same story about the consequences of limited perception over the course of about twenty-five years in *The Book of Urizen* (1794), *The Four Zoas* (c. 1796-1807?), *Milton* (c. 1804-1815), and *Jerusalem* (c. 1804-1820).¹⁸ According to Blake, our perception is not necessarily limited by our sensory organs: he believed that we can perceive more than what our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin tell us. Limited perception recognizes difference, but it is actually the precondition for what he calls expansive vision, which recognizes resemblance. Expansive vision is fundamentally imaginative and the key to our spiritual awakening, to the recognition of divinity within ourselves. In *The Book of Urizen*, this story of limited perception involves a character named Los, who represents the imagination. Los sees Urizen, a character who represents reason and limitation itself, and recoils in horror. Through Los' limited and limiting organs of perception, he sees Urizen as radically separate from him. Los then becomes the embodiment of the division he beholds, and a globe of blood separates from him. Blake introduces the concept of expansive vision in this globe of blood, which becomes a woman

¹⁸ The publication in 1965 of David V. Erdman's *The Complete Poetry & Prose of William Blake* fueled a debate about whether we can, or should, read only the text of Blake's works. Erdman's book, which presents only the text of Blake's poems and was named "An Approved Edition" by the Committee on Scholarly Editions of the Modern Language Association. If one wishes to read Blake's illuminated poetry—words and images together—one needs to read Erdman's edition alongside his variorum edition of Blake's illuminations (*The Illuminated Blake*, 1974). For my purposes, Erdman's book is more of a reference and guide than that which offers the experience of reading Blake. In Chapter Two I primarily draw on two sources: volumes of *Blake's Illuminated Books* (Princeton), which reproduce one copy of a poem and provide extensive information about a poem's textual history, and The Blake Archive (www.blakearchive.org), edited by Morris Eaves, Robert Essick, and Joseph Viscomi. The electronic archive includes biographical information, collection lists, and multiple copies of most of Blake's poems.

representative of the first woman, Eve: she eventually gives birth to Jesus, the figure through whom our vision might expand so that we recognize our resemblance to the divine.

When we look at the multiple versions of this story, a pattern emerges: the narrative itself becomes shorter, and in *Jerusalem* it is contained in a phrase that repeats six times: “they became what they beheld.” The significance of this phrase that links together four of Blake’s major poems, and calls attention to itself through repetition, has not yet been critically explored. The multiple versions of this narrative reveal a connection between the process of revision and the story itself: contraction is essential to both. Each version tells the story of what happens when perception is limited, and each version of the story is more abbreviated than the previous version. If we think of revision as a teleological process in which the author alters something until it is in its final form, then we might expect Blake’s last version of this narrative in *Jerusalem* to be the most comprehensive. However, it is the most incomprehensible version: the narrative is so brief that it makes no sense unless we read it in the context of its earlier versions. Reading a minute particular in the wider context of Blake’s canon is not only “productive,” as Saree Makdisi claims, but also essential if we are to understand the meaning and significance of the *Jerusalem* version of the narrative of limited perception (157). Blake’s practice of narrative revision, then, establishes an intertextual system of relation, instead of a teleological system of improvement, in which our understanding of one version is contingent upon all other versions.¹⁹

¹⁹ Tilottama Rajan and Saree Makdisi have substantially influenced my understanding of intertextuality in Blake’s poetry. In *The Supplement of Reading*, Rajan argues that Blake’s early poems are not “shadowy types of the later work,” but works that invite “intertextual rather than teleological reading”; such an intertextual reading “displace[s] the notion that a poet’s canon is made up of a diachronic series of works that build on each other” (197-99; see also pp. 197-274). Makdisi performs a similar kind of reading in *William Blake and the Impossible*

Drawing on other figurations of limited perception from Blake's canon, we can see this last version of the story, the textual repetition in *Jerusalem*, as a figure for expansive vision similar to the globe of blood that divides from Los, a minute particular through which we might behold the transformative vision of *Jerusalem*.

My reading of Blake's narrative of limited perception serves as a foundation for the experiments in reading multiple textual versions that follow in Chapters Three and Four. In order to explore other practices of textual revision as well as the possible relationship between revision and that which is revised, I look at two nineteenth-century long poems that were written and revised over long periods of time: Wordsworth's *The Prelude* and Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. Instead of the intertextual system of a canon, these chapters focus on the intertextuality of multiple versions of the same poem, or part of a poem. Long poems are particularly well suited to this kind of examination because they are often discussed in terms of the relationship between part and whole.²⁰ In general, one might map a long poem's unified or serial structure, trace an image through a long poem in relation to its structure, or read a specific passage as an emblematic or disruptive part of the whole

History of the 1790s when he analyzes plate 6 of *America* (1793) in the "discontinuous and heterogeneous verbal and visual context provided by Blake's other works"—that is, in an intertextual context that includes other poems in Blake's canon (157). Additionally, The Blake archive allows anyone (with an internet connection) to read Blake's copies, plates, words, and images with unprecedented intertextual fluidity.

²⁰ The form of the long poem we are perhaps most familiar with is the epic, "a long verse narrative on a serious subject, told in a formal and elevated style, and centered on a heroic or quasi-divine figure on whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation, or (in the instance of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*) the human race" (Abrams 76). Other examples include Virgil's *Aeneid*, Homer's *Illiad & Odyssey*, *Beowulf*, Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (mock-epic), Blake's *Four Zoas*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem*, Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, Keats's *Hyperion*, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*, Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, and Crane's *The Bridge*. There is no set length for a long poem: Keats's *Hyperion* contains over 800 lines, while Wordsworth's 1805 version of *The Prelude* contains over 8,000 lines.

poem. Such readings tend to draw on an analogous narrative, an over-arching metaphor, or the poet's own formulation of the relationship between part and whole. For long poems that exist in multiple versions, these categories of part and whole overlap: a version of a poem, which is a whole in one sense, is also a part that contributes to a greater whole—the “poem” that is made up of its parts. More specifically, reading among multiple versions of these revised long poems means reading them diachronically, as versions with a textual history, and synchronically, as parts that make up a whole. Reading synchronically equalizes the importance of all versions and redefines their priority; a final version that is understood diachronically and synchronically is both a particular version written at a particular time, and a version that contributes to the whole. This methodology recognizes the temporal relationship among versions as well as the independence of each version. Early versions of the poems in this study are not seen as false starts, or disposable fossils from which later versions evolve: each version provides us with a particular point of view, or expression, of the whole. In the following chapters, one will not find answers to questions that dominate many discussions of poetic revision: why did the poet cross out a certain word and replace it with another word? Do a poet's revisions make the poem better, or worse? What does that tell us about the poet? What is the “best” version of a poem? Readings of revision that focus on evaluation or authorial intention ultimately prevent us from asking crucial questions about the relationship among versions. A version whose revision might appear not to improve the poem can turn out to have a specific and important function when we consider its relationship to other versions. As an advocate of the legitimacy of the multiple textual versions of Blake's narrative, Wordsworth's episode, and Tennyson's poem, I argue that one version should

not be privileged over others: final versions are considered to be just as important as other versions. Readers are asked to think about revision not as a process of correction or improvement, but as a process of producing different visions of the same narrative, or poem.

Each of the long poems explored in this study is concerned with the growth of consciousness: Blake's *Jerusalem* narrates a story about spiritual awakening through imaginative vision; Wordsworth's *The Prelude* tells to its addressee, Coleridge, the story of the growth of the poet's mind, particularly the restoration of imagination through memory; and Tennyson's *In Memoriam* narrates the poet's growing sense of solace as he struggles to come to terms with the death of a dear friend. Although different in each poem, revision is central to the stories these poems tell. They are not so much works, but workings—records of the continuous process of seeing (or singing) something again and recasting it in a new light. Blake contracted, or abbreviated, textual and visual versions of the story of contracted perception in several poems over the course of twenty-six years (1794 to 1820); Wordsworth framed a particular episode with various invocations to Coleridge-as-witness in manuscript versions of *The Prelude* over the course of forty years (1798-1799 to 1839); and Tennyson added new sections to published versions of *In Memoriam* over the course of twenty years (1850 to 1870). Attempting to bring issues of textual pluralism to bear upon literary interpretation, I set out to read among versions of *The Prelude* and *In Memoriam*.

Reading Wordsworth's Deletions

While Blake's productions might be considered "private" in the sense that they had a small readership during his lifetime,²¹ they were more public than Wordsworth's versions of *The Prelude*, which he only read or sent to Coleridge on a few occasions, and for which his wife Mary and his sister Dorothy were the main copyists. Wordsworth's versions of *The Prelude* remained in manuscript as the "Poem to Coleridge" from 1798 to 1850. Mary published the poem as *The Prelude* after his death in 1850. Multiple versions of *The Prelude* have not always been available to readers: until 1926, the only published version of the poem was the 1850 version. Ernest de Selincourt's 1926 edition of *The Prelude* included the 1850 version and the 1805-6 version on facing pages. The two-part poem was first published in 1974 by Jonathan Wordsworth and Stephen Gill in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (third edition).²² The Cornell Wordsworth series published the following versions of the poem: *The Prelude 1798-1799* (1977); *The Thirteen-Book Prelude* (2 vols., 1985); and *The Fourteen-Book Prelude* (1991). Each of the Cornell Wordsworth volumes, which I use exclusively in Chapter Two, contains photographic reproductions of manuscripts, transcriptions of those pages, and reading texts. In effect, these volumes present us with the opportunity to read versions both fettered and unfettered by editorial intervention.

The differences between the early and late versions of *The Prelude* have often been explained in terms of Wordsworth's identity: the poem

²¹ For example, the surviving copies of *Songs of Innocence* (26), *Songs of Experience* (4), and the combined *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (24) total fifty-four copies, the highest number of copies of any of Blake's works. In contrast, only four copies of *Milton* survive.

²² Jonathan Wordsworth, M.H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill published an edition that included the 1798-1799 two-part poem as well as the 1805 and 1850 versions on facing pages in 1979.

changed because the poet changed. In “Textual Primitivism and the Editing of Wordsworth” (1989), Jack Stillinger asserts that “the interval between original composition and significant revision involved not only temporal but psychological distance, and in such cases the revising poet may be thought of as having a separate identity from the poet who composed in the first place” (3). Stillinger argues that different poetic identities make up a whole poetic identity and that the editors of the Cornell Wordsworth series pass over the later Wordsworth in favor of the younger Wordsworth. Although his criticisms of the Cornell Wordsworth series point out the difficulties inherent in producing editions of Wordsworth’s poems, he articulates his concern for the later versions in order to make a larger point about the textual pluralism of *The Prelude*—that is, the “legitimacy and interest, intrinsic or in connection with other texts, of *all* the versions of *The Prelude*” (27).²³ Other scholars, however, opposed the omission of the 1850 version of *The Prelude* in the Cornell Wordsworth volume, *The Fourteen-Book Prelude*. J. Robert Barth argues that Wordsworth’s comment to Alexander Dyce in an April 1830 letter—“you know what importance I attach to following strictly the last Copy of the text of an Author”—is evidence that the poet imbued the 1850 version of the poem with his authority; in essence, Barth accuses the Cornell Wordsworth editors of “replacing the poet’s judgment with their own.”²⁴ Responding to a similar claim

²³ His criticisms are 1) the “elusiveness of the ‘earliest complete state’ of a work, the expressed goal” of many of the Cornell volumes (citing “*The Ruined Cottage*” and “*The Pedlar*”); 2) the “focus or scope of annotation in some of the Cornell volumes...as one more manifestation of bias favoring early texts over later” (citing *The Borderers*); 3) the “virtual exclusion of Wordsworth’s final texts” (citing *Peter Bell*); and 4) the “general effect that the Cornell emphasis on early texts may have on the study and understanding of Wordsworth in the next several decades” (citing “*Poems, in Two Volumes*”) (14-20).

²⁴ *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years* 236; Lindenberger, Fruman, Barth, and others, “Waiting for the Palfreys: The Great *Prelude* Debate,” *The Wordsworth Circle* 17.1 (1986): 16. Further citations from this source will be indicated by “Palfreys.”

made by Jeffrey Baker—that Wordsworth ‘authorized the text of 1850’—W.J.B. Owen (editor of *The Fourteen-Book Prelude*) comments: “He [Wordsworth] had copied, in 1839, a manuscript of the poem with which he fiddled and fiddled, but he never authorized any printed text. A text was issued in 1850 which had been fiddled with by his representatives, and does not even represent the final manuscript as Wordsworth worked on it; it represents their view of what the tone ought to be.”²⁵

In terms of the interpretation of multiple textual versions of *The Prelude*, literary critics have typically focused on versions of an episode in the poem and read them diachronically as a way to evaluate them or explain why the poet revised in a particular way. For example, Penny Bond reads multiple versions of the “Snowdon Incident” (Book XIII, 1805; Book XIV, 1850) and argues that Wordsworth’s revisions “were not for the better”.²⁶ Identifying an “ambivalence at work” in the changes made to the “Drowned Man” episode (Book V), Susan Wolfson argues that Wordsworth’s most significant revision (the “abstraction” of the corpse “into art and purest poesy”) gave him the “illusion of mastery” over this haunting figure.²⁷ Though multiple textual versions are, for Wolfson, legitimate, they tell us more about the poet than the poem.

²⁵ Palfreys 27.

²⁶ Bond, “The Snowdon Incident: Visions and Revisions,” *The Charles Lamb Bulletin* 112 (2000): 183-92; see also Manning, “Reading Wordsworth’s Revisions: Othello and the Drowned Man,” *Studies in Romanticism* 22.1 (1983): 3-28, and Hale “Wordsworth, Revision, and the Blessed Babe: Reading the Mother in Book 2 of *The Prelude*,” *Mosaic* 33.3 (2000): 145-63.

²⁷ Wolfson, “The Illusion of Mastery: Wordsworth’s Revisions of ‘The Drowned Man of Esthwaite,’ 1799, 1805, 1850,” *PMLA* 99.4 (1984): 917-935.

Chapter Two focuses on a textual practice that Wordsworth engaged in as he worked on the poem over four decades: the revision of references to Coleridge. In order to explore the significance of this particular practice, I look at two specific examples: one in which Wordsworth revises a citation of Coleridge, and one in which he revises an address to Coleridge. In the first example, the deletion of the citation is accompanied by an insertion of the poet-as-witness into the scene of memory. This textual practice is part of a larger process which we can view in more detail in Wordsworth's revision of an address to Coleridge in a well-known, but rarely-discussed, "spot of time": the "waiting for the horses" episode. In this episode, the poet reflects on the memory of waiting anxiously as a teenaged schoolboy for horses to take him home for the Christmas holidays. This memory is linked to his father's death, which occurred only days after he returned home. The adult poet then explains that this memory has often been a source of imaginative restoration; when he finds himself in a landscape that reminds him of that day so long ago, a deeply spiritual feeling comes to him from that place of memory.

Critics who have analyzed the "waiting for the horses" episode have typically read one version, and interpreted it in a psychoanalytical framework. Drawing on Freudian readings of the traumatic death of the poet's father, John Ellis and Eugene Stelzig focus on the poet's sense of guilt: his adolescent contention that his father's death is God's punishment for his anxious desire to go home. In *Wordsworth, Freud and the spots of time* (1985), Ellis looks briefly at the 1798-99 version of the episode, but concludes that it does not differ "in any significant way" from the 1805 version, which he then concentrates on exclusively (25). Wordsworth's revision of the episode in the 1850 version does not show his poetic "strength," according to Ellis, who suggests that its

opacity reflects the state of mind of the author: “Wordsworth no longer had very clear ideas on the subject matter” (26). In “Wordsworth’s Bleeding Spots: Traumatic Memories of the Absent Father in *The Prelude*,” Stelzig argues that Wordsworth’s “failure to consciously come to terms with or integrate” his father’s death into *The Prelude* haunts, or “bleed[s] into,” other spots of time—namely, the Penrith beacon, the Drowned Man, the Discharged Soldier, and Blind Beggar episodes (533, 539-40). Stelzig does not consider Wordsworth’s textual revision of the “waiting for the horses” episode—he too reads only the 1805 version. For Stelzig, revision is a basic thematic element of the poem—that is, the “imaginative and revisionary act of self-composition that is also a mode of auto-therapy” in which he “does the work of memory and mourning that is the ‘building’ of his adult identity” (542). Textual revision, however, is a constitutive practice that cannot be overlooked in *The Prelude*, especially with respect to versions of the “waiting for the horses” episode. The appearance of elements in other episodes that remind us of the “waiting for the horses” episode does not necessarily constitute a failure to “integrate” his father’s death into the poem; alternatively, it might indicate that his repeated revision of this episode has wider implications—that these other episodes are, in some way, versions of the “waiting for the horses” episode.

When we look at multiple versions of the “waiting for the horses” episode, we see that Wordsworth framed the episode with different addresses to Coleridge that figure him as a witness to the poet’s restoration. Wordsworth revised this address several times before removing it. Reading among versions here reveals that, like other textual alterations, omissions have a significant impact on meaning. Wordsworth’s practice of removing references to Coleridge as someone who will visually witness his restoration, or listen to

the story of his memory, links this absence to the poet's presence as a witness to his own growth and restoration.

Reading Tennyson's Additions

Chapter Four extends this exploration of poetry in process from the Romantic period to the Victorian period (1832-1901) by focusing on multiple versions of Alfred Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. Tennyson is similar to Blake in that he published many different versions of the same poem over a substantial period of time; and he is also similar to Wordsworth in that they were both public figures and poet laureates.²⁸ However, unlike both Blake and Wordsworth, Tennyson produced a final version of this poem. The Romantic poets we've looked at produced a profusion of poetry in process, whereas Tennyson produced poetry in process until it reached what he considered a final form. Although this practice is similar to that of an Augustan poet like Pope, or a poet of sensibility like Young, Tennyson produced substantially more versions (over thirty) over a longer period of time (more than fifty years). In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Tennyson made poetry in process a remarkably public production.

In Memoriam—a poem precipitated by the death in 1833 of Tennyson's friend, Arthur Hallam—records a story of loss and mourning through the poet's oscillation between grief and solace. It is fundamentally a poem about revision and Tennyson's practice of revising it is central to its meaning. The chronology of the poem spans almost three years, during which the poet repeatedly looks back on his past in order to move toward the future: sometimes the poet's

²⁸ Wordsworth became poet laureate in 1843, after Robert Southey's death; Tennyson became poet laureate in 1850, after Wordsworth's death.

retrospection prompts a new realization about his emotional state, and other times it revives feelings of intense sorrow. Tennyson revised the poem in manuscripts from 1833 to 1850, and published multiple versions from 1850 to 1884.

Tennyson's dislike of early versions had a direct impact on the survival of *In Memoriam* manuscripts, and on scholars' ability to access those manuscripts; it helped generate the assumption that we need only read, or produce, the last version. One version has indeed substituted for the whole largely because Tennyson eventually produced what he viewed as a final version. Susan Shatto's and Marion Shaw's *Tennyson: In Memoriam* (1982), from which I draw exclusively in Chapter Four, provides information about earlier versions as an apparatus to the final edition Tennyson published in 1884. In addition to the text of the poem based on the 1884 edition, with a commentary on each section, it also includes a detailed account of each surviving manuscript that contributed to the poem; a summary of the growth of the poem from 1833-1870; and an appendix that lists minor variants in the 1884 text.²⁹

Unfortunately, very few manuscripts survive. What little we do know about Tennyson's practice of revision during this period has been analyzed in relation to the first published edition of the poem (1850). Christopher Ricks, who wrote a seminal study on Tennyson in 1972, and edited the standard edition of Tennyson's poems, discusses Tennyson's revisions of *In Memoriam* only briefly.³⁰ Focusing on section 129, he argues that the early version of the

²⁹ We are still in need of an edition that makes available photographic reproductions of *In Memoriam* manuscripts.

³⁰ In their notes, Shatto & Shaw refer to the second edition of Ricks' *The Poems of Tennyson* (1987), which includes information from the Trinity College manuscripts.

last stanza (in the *Trial* issue, March 1850) is “so much better” than the later version (April 1850), which retreats from the “possibly offensive notion” that “what counted supremely was not his faith in good but his love for Hallam.”³¹ Again, reading among versions often means evaluating them. Much work has been done by Susan Shatto on the few, extant *In Memoriam* manuscripts, although much of her analysis of Tennyson’s revisions focuses on the evolution and whether it improved (or not).³²

Central to my claims about revision in *In Memoriam* is a consideration of Tennyson’s textual practice of revision from 1833 (when he began writing and revising lyric sections in notebooks) to 1884 (when he published the last version of the poem). One of the most significant revisions Tennyson made was the addition of sections to published versions of *In Memoriam* published in 1850, 1851, and 1870. The impact of this work on our understanding of the poem as a whole has not yet been explored. As I argue in Chapter Four, we need to recognize not only that Tennyson revised *In Memoriam* from 1833 to 1850, but also that he significantly revised the poem from 1850 to 1884. Only if we consider the poem’s entire textual history and the full range of its versions, can we understand more fully how the practice of revision impacts the meaning of that which is revised.

³¹ *Tennyson* 224. Ricks discusses this revision in relation to the poem’s homoerotic elements, its “tone of amatory tenderness,” for which *The Times* condemned it (219). A profitable discussion of the relationship between textual revision and the poem’s mapping of what Jeff Nunokawa calls “the extinction of the homosexual” might focus on Tennyson’s practice of obscuring references to Hallam (*English Literary History* 58.2 (1991): 427-38).

³² See “The First Written Sections of ‘In Memoriam,’” *Notes and Queries* 25 (1978): 233-37; “Tennyson’s Revisions of *In Memoriam*,” *Victorian Poetry* 16 (1978): 341-356; and “Tennyson’s *In Memoriam*: Section 123 in the Manuscripts,” *Library: A Quarterly Journal of Bibliography* 2: (1980): 302-14.

The sections that Tennyson added to *In Memoriam* (as a pair, or as a partner to a section already in the poem) share a common subject: in 7 and 119, the poet finds himself outside the doors to Hallam's house; in 3 and 59 he addresses Sorrow, a projection of his own emotion; and in 2 and 39 he addresses a yew tree, onto which he also projects his feelings of grief. In each of these pairs the section that appears later in the sequence of the poem revises its earlier partner section both thematically and formally. That is, in the later section the poet looks back on the attitudes he expressed in the earlier section and revises them. The later section also recalls and recasts an end-rhyme from its earlier partner, underscoring this shift in perspective. When we look at the textual history of these incorporated sections, we discover that the final section Tennyson added to the poem in 1870 (section 39) complements its partner section more closely than any other, and formally marks the close of this process of structural revision.

This study of revision in Romantic and Victorian long poems that exist in multiple versions takes the claims of textual pluralists a necessary step further. Building on the work of those who have argued for the legitimacy of multiple textual versions, this dissertation attempts to read versions diachronically and synchronically. When we take into consideration the textual history of a version, as well as its contribution to a whole, we recognize important relationships among versions. If we look at only one version of Blake's narrative, or Wordsworth's episode, or Tennyson's poem, we base our interpretations on a limited point of view. These poets provided us with multiple perspectives from which to view their works of art. Whether they eventually produced a final view (like Tennyson), or not (like Blake and Wordsworth), all versions are important visions that teach us about the

relationship between form and content, process and product, part and whole. Ultimately, I hope to show that the practice of textual revision is part of the meaning of that which is repeatedly revised. Recognizing Blake's practice of abbreviating the narrative of contracted perception allows us to understand the last version, and see this process of revision as a figure for expansive vision and revelation in the larger story. Reading Wordsworth's practice of reframing and removing references to Coleridge in *The Prelude* allows us to understand the significance of textual absence and its relationship to the growth of the poet's presence. Finally, considering Tennyson's practice of adding paired, or partner sections to published versions of *In Memoriam* allows us to understand the importance of revision, incorporation, and closure in the wake of loss.

A Parting Song

As a brief, concluding gesture, the Coda to this study looks at the affinities between British and American nineteenth-century poetry in process. While in the preceding chapters I look at multiple versions of a narrative, an episode, and a poem, in the Coda I consider what Swinburne called the "points of contact and sides of likeness" between two poets who sung the same again: Whitman and Blake. Whitman based the design for his tomb on one of Blake's engravings, and it is this material sign of connection that initially focuses the chapter. Within this frame, I consider Whitman's responses to Blake, their shared status as prophetic poets, and the striking appearance of tropes of revision, contraction and expansion, in both authors' long poems. Characters in Blake's larger mythological narrative (specifically the story of limited perception discussed in Chapter Two) and the poet in Whitman's *Song*

of Myself experience a perceptual crisis in which they are threatened with contraction: both subjects overcome (actual or potential) contraction by becoming what they behold in order to expand.

Whitman's poetry in process had an enormous impact on American poets in the twentieth century, like Crane, Eliot, Pound, Ginsberg, Berryman, Merrill, Ammons, and Ashbery. As poets who dedicated most, if not all of their lives to the process of poetic revision, Blake, Wordsworth, and Tennyson are predecessors of this legacy. The songs they sang again (and again) reveal the vital connection between form and expression, the creative production inherent in *poiesis*. Returning to Blake's Piper, we find that at the end of "Introduction" in *Songs of Innocence* the child on a cloud says, "sit thee down and write / In a book that all may read" (13-14). The new versions of his "song about a Lamb" require a new instrument. The Piper concludes: "And I pluck'd a hollow reed / And I made a rural pen, / and I stain'd the water clear, / And I wrote my happy songs, / Every child may joy to hear" (16-20).

CHAPTER TWO

Revision and Recognition in Blake's Jerusalem

Awake! awake O Sleeper of the land of shadows, wake! expand!
I am in you and you in me, mutual love divine.
(*Jerusalem* 4.6-7)³³

William Blake's last long poem, *Jerusalem*, is about the transformation of perception, overcoming the illusory and fallen world of space and time through our imagination, and recognizing the divine and infinite within. It is a radically private and intensely solicitous poem that challenges readers to be aware of the nature of their own perception. One of these challenges comes in the form of a directive from Los, the poet-prophet. Interrupting a narrative on plate 34, he declares:

If Perceptive Organs vary: Objects of Perception seem to vary:
If the Perceptive organs close: their Objects seem to close also
Consider this O mortal man: O worm of sixty winters said Los
(34[30].55-7)³⁴

This admonition to "mortal man" describes a conditional relationship between organs of perception and their objects: if organs vary or close, then those organs perceive objects that seem to vary or close. In other words, how we

³³ All citations from *Jerusalem* are from *William Blake: Jerusalem, The Illuminated Books*, vol. 1 (1991), which reproduces copy E (1821). Parenthetical citations refer to plate and line numbers.

³⁴ Earlier on Plate 34 of *Jerusalem*, Los' refutation of Vala's declaration of sovereignty over the "Imaginative Human Form" (33.49) is directed at her husband, Albion, and the eldest Son of Albion, Hand: "There is a Throne in every Man, it is the Throne of God / This Woman has claimd as her own" (34.27-28). Los, the poet-prophet, asks why Albion has created this "Female Will" that obscures the "most evident God" in her shadows, and accuses Hand of remaining in just such a "vaporous Shadow" (34.31-32, 37). But Hand reminds Los of his own son, Reuben, and the rest of Plate 34 focuses on Los' attempts to bend, or limit, Reuben's senses so that he might gain an imaginative vision that could recognize divinity in humanity.

see affects what we see. But why does Los interrupt the narrative and address the reader here? The narrator was in the middle of recounting a story about those who saw a character called Reuben and “became what they beheld.” Immediately preceding Los’s interruption, we are in fact told twice that they “became what they beheld.” Might Los’s directive draw our attention to something we may have overlooked? If we look again at the repetition of “they became what they beheld,” what might we see?

In order to understand the nature of Blakean perception, we can turn to one of his earliest etched poems, “There is No Natural Religion” (1788), in which he claims that perception is *not* limited by organs of perception:

I Mans perceptions are not bounded by organs of perception. he
perceives more than sense (tho’ ever so acute) can discover.
II Reason or the ratio of all we have already known. is not the
same that it shall be when we know more.

(*The Early Illuminated Books* 56)

Organs of perception mediate, but do not bind, one’s perception: it is possible to perceive “more than sense.” Perception unbound by these sensory organs reveals that the limitation of “Reason or the ratio” is set against the perception of the infinite. Moreover, the reasoning power in Man is a Spectre in Blake’s mythology—that part of the self that must be annihilated. Blake disagreed with Locke’s contention in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) that sensation and reflection are the basis of knowledge, because such a conception precludes the possibility of divine revelation.³⁵ S. Foster Damon notes that Blake usually groups Locke (philosopher of the five senses) with Bacon (founder of experimental science) and Newton (conceiver of a

³⁵ See Blake’s attack on Locke’s philosophy of the five senses in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* 3.2-13.

mechanistic and Godless universe); these men are an “evil trinity,” and “the teachers of the atheism of unbelief and materialism, or Natural Religion.”³⁶ In *Jerusalem*, Bacon’s and Newton’s “terrors hang / Like iron scourges over Albion,” and in the “Schools & Universities of Europe,” the “Loom of Locke” is “Washd by the Water-wheels of Newton” (l.15.11, 14-16). These “wheels” of reason and materiality have “cogs tyrannic” (l.15.18), similar to the “round[s] even of a univer[s]e” in Part IV of “There is no Natural Religion[b]” that “would soon become a mill with complicated wheels.” In the “Conclusion” to “There is no Natural Religion[b]” Blake declares the impotence of the “Philosophic & Experimental” in terms of mechanistic repetition:

If it were not for the Poetic or Prophetic character. the
Philosophic & Experimental would soon be at the ratio of all
things & stand still, unable to do other than repeat the same dull
round over again (*The Early Illuminated Books* 65)

To be “at the ratio of all things” is to be at a point of inertia and “repeat the same dull round over again.” In other words, the wheels turn, but do not go anywhere. The figure of the “round” in Blake’s works extends beyond wheels to include globes and “globules” of blood: Earth is a “Globe rolling thro Voidness,” and a “round globe of blood” divides from Los (*Milton* 28.15; *The Book of Urizen*, Plate 12).³⁷ To the reasoner, the round Earth might be seen as a mechanism of the universe, just as a round globe of blood might be seen as a mechanism of the human body. A phrase like “they became what they

³⁶ In the final apocalypse in *Jerusalem* IV.98.9, however, Locke, Bacon, and Newton are not annihilated: they “are revealed in their essential genius as the three great scientists counterbalancing the three great poets Milton, Shakespeare, and Chaucer” ((Damon 243).

³⁷ All citations from *Milton* are from *William Blake: Milton, The Illuminated Books*, vol. 5 (1993), which reproduces copy C (1811); and all citations from *The Book of Urizen* are from *William Blake: The Urizen Books, The Illuminated Books*, vol. 6 (1995), which reproduces copy D (1794).

beheld” on *Jerusalem* Plate 34 might also appear to do nothing but “repeat the same dull round over again.” Such a “bounded,” or limited, perception of this textual repetition would require an intervention by the “Poetic or Prophetic character,” Los.

Objects of Perception

When Los interrupts the narrative on Plate 34 of *Jerusalem*, he warns the reader that closed organs perceive closed objects. Blake expresses practically the same sentiment in his “emblem book,” *For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise*.³⁸ Plate 11 depicts “Aged Ignorance” with the caption “<Perceptive Organs closed their Objects close>.” An old man seated at the base of a tree holds a child by one of its wings, and prepares to cut the child’s other wing with a pair of scissors in his right hand. The winged child’s face is turned away, towards the sun, and his right arm is outstretched, palm open. The lines from the “Keys of the Gates” that pertain to this plate are: “In Aged Ignorance Profound / Holy & cold I clipd the Wings / Of all Sublunary Things.” The old man’s eyes are closed, and the glasses he wears paradoxically further emphasize his contracted perception. Aged Ignorance’s glasses are analogous to pernicious Newtonian devices, like the “Microscope” and the “Telescope,” that “alter / The ratio of the Spectators Organs,” but remain bound by sense perception (*Milton* 28.17-18). Furthermore, Aged Ignorance wears glasses so that *we see* that his eyes are closed. Figurally, then, contracted perception *clips the wings* of its object.

³⁸ First published in 1793 as *For Children: The Gates of Paradise, For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise* dates from sometime after 1806 (Erdman 813).

Blake often explains the dangers of contracted perception through objects that are both human and winged. The speaker in "The Fly," from *Songs of Experience*, admits to having "brush'd away" the "Little Fly" with his "thoughtless hand":

Little Fly
Thy summers play,
My thoughtless hand
Has brush'd away. (1-4)

Consciousness of such disregard on the part of the speaker prompts the parallel and chiasmic realization: "Am not I / A fly like thee? / Or art not thou / A man like me?" (5-8). The fly-like speaker continues,

For I dance
And drink & sing:
Till some blind hand
Shall brush my wing. (9-12)

While the thoughtless hand belongs to the human speaker who brushed away the fly, the blind hand belongs to another who will brush the human's wing in the future.³⁹ Both of these hands collapse Aged Ignorance's closed eyes and threatening hand: as organs of contracted perception, they limit (or destroy) their objects. It is important to recognize that the speaker becomes like the object he sees *after* he has killed the fly; his realization that he resembles the fly is bound up in an awareness of his own mortality.

³⁹ It is unclear to whom this "blind hand" belongs. Harold Bloom argues that the poem is about the need to free ourselves from "the blind hand of a god . . . when it brushes us away." Bloom bases his short analysis on what might be Blake's allusion to *King Lear*, "As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods. / They kill us for their sport" (IV.i.36-7) (*Blake's Apocalypse* 136-7). In Blake's "Auguries of Innocence," the spider retaliates: "The wanton Boy that kills the Fly / Shall feel the Spiders enmity" (33-4; Erdman 490).

“The Fly” ends with a conditional comparison that describes the speaker’s realization of similitude between himself and the fly in metaphorical terms:

If thought is life
And strength & breath:
And the want
Of thought is death;

Then am I
A happy fly,
If I live,
Or if I die.

The comparison of thoughtlessness to death here makes explicit the death of the fly by the speaker’s thoughtless hand in the first stanza.⁴⁰ In these final stanzas, one might expect him to say, “if thought is like this, then blindness is like that.” Instead, he substitutes his resemblance to the fly in place of any further commentary on the blind hand that will be the agent of his death. The consequential “then” clause states the repetition of the resemblance between speaker and fly in metaphorical terms: he is not only like a fly, he is a fly.

Harold Bloom takes these last two stanzas of the poem to mean that “we are at best happy flies (because deluded ones), whether we live or die” (137). The knowledge that we are happy flies may seem like the delusive rhetorical strategy of a speaker who both reveals and conceals the knowledge of his own mortality, but in the final stanza such knowledge is subordinate to the revelation of similitude: the revelation that he is a (happy) fly, that there is a

⁴⁰ Anne Mellor notes that while some critics give “thought” in the fourth stanza a positive value (see Jean Hagstrum, “The Fly,” *William Blake: Essays for S. Foster Damon*, 376-80), she reads “thought” negatively and takes these stanzas to mean: “‘If (according to you, Descartes, Urizen or the voice of rational Experience) thought is life . . . ,’ then truly am I free and ‘happy,’ so long as I ignore or deny your assumptions” (*Blake’s Human Form Divine* 334).

similitude between winged objects and human objects, is crucial to the expansion of contracted perception both here and in the larger scope of Blake's poetry.

When we consider what we see when we look at the illuminated plate of "The Fly," this winged and human speaker, who calls himself a "man," appears as a young boy: a mother figure holds up the boy's arms as if either to show the child that his arms are like the wings of the fly, or to comply with the child's request to hold his arms.⁴¹ The disparity in age between the child and the man might also suggest that "The Fly" tells the story of experience in the gap between the illumination and the text. Thus, the child on the illuminated plate of "The Fly" links the speaker, who is an object of the contracted perception of the "blind hand," to the winged child at the mercy of the blind man, Aged Ignorance, in *The Gates of Paradise*.

The reader's perception of a similarly winged and human object is also at stake in *Milton*:

Seest thou the little winged fly, smaller than a grain of sand?
It has a heart like thee; a brain open to heaven & hell,
Withinside wondrous & expansive; its gates are not clos'd,
I hope thine are not; hence it clothes itself in rich array;
Hence thou art cloth'd with human beauty O thou mortal man.
(19[18].27-31)⁴²

⁴¹ Because this older female figure does not appear in the text of the poem, neither of these assumptions can be textually supported. There is another female figure depicted in the background of the plate who is about to hit a "shuttlecock perhaps meant to resemble an insect on the wing," according to Geoffrey Keynes' commentary in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1970) 147-8. Jean Hagstrum sees the older female figure on the plate as a "sad mother teaching a boy to walk" (*William Blake: Essays for S. Foster Damon* 369).

⁴² These lines follow Blake's description of multiple aspects of Milton's character—his "Mortal part," his "Redeemed portion," and "within that portion / His real Human [who] walkd above in power and majesty / Tho darkend" (19[18].10-14)—before he attempts to recover his lost emanation, Ololon.

Later in *Milton*, the interrogative “seest thou” is transposed: what we were *asked* to see before becomes what we *do see* now—“the gorgeous clothed Flies” that are Los’ children.

These child-flies are similar to the winged child in *The Gates of Paradise* and the fly-man in “The Fly.” Clothed in fly and human beauty, Los’ children dance (as the speaker in “The Fly” does) in a pattern that is similar to weaving.⁴³

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Since Blake assures us that the spiritual figuration of these flies as winged sons are “the Visions of Eternity,” our mortal perception of them is limited: when we lack expansive vision, “we see only as it were the hem of their garments” (25[26].10-11).

Revision and Variation

Before we look at the relationship between these winged and human objects of perception and Blake’s revision of the story of contracted perception, we should pause to consider how my reading of textual and visual versions of this narrative in several of Blake’s poems differs from readings of revision in Blake that focus on variations among multiple copies of one poem. When we read Blake’s works, we are confronted with variation and difference: he printed several copies of each poem, and each of these copies is unique with respect to structure, text, design, and/or coloration. For example, only two of the eight copies of *The Book of Urizen* contain all the plates Blake etched for the poem, and in each copy the full-page designs are ordered differently. I would argue that each poem is, in effect, all the different copies of that poem; each copy represents a different way of seeing that includes other versions in its purview. There is considerable disagreement among critics about variations in Blake’s works: are they intentional changes, or inherent consequences of his method of production (etching, inking, printing, washing in watercolors, etc.)? Moreover, are variations that are intentional revisions more significant to the meaning of a poem than variations that indicate a particular time period of production? In “The Text, the Poem, and the Problem of Historical Method,” Jerome McGann claims that Blake produced unique copies of *Jerusalem* purposefully, unfettered by artistic limitation: variations are not “merely

accidental, and unimportant for the ‘meaning’ of Blake’s work. Certainly to Blake they seemed immensely consequential” (276). Alternatively, Joseph Viscomi argues that variation is a consequence of the way in which Blake produced copies of a poem, but it is not a consequential part of the poem’s meaning: the “assumption that variants were intended or perceived by Blake as meaningful, produced deliberately to destabilize the text and to make every copy of a book a separate version, is based on a misunderstanding of Blake’s mode of book production and its ruling paradigm . . . variation—in the form of states, proofs, prints before letters, size and type of paper, and so on—was inherent to the aesthetics and economics of conventional print production . . . The differences are in emphasis and detail, not in the nature of phenomenon” (*Blake and the Idea of the Book* 167, 169). While this study is not concerned with whether Blake intended to make copies of his poems different, I would argue that those differences impact the meaning of the poem. I would also offer that McGann’s and Viscomi’s positions are not mutually exclusive: Blake’s method of production probably resulted in unintentional variations, and Blake probably changed, for example, the order of plates in a copy of a poem on purpose. Both kinds of variation have implications for our reading of multiple copies of one of Blake’s poems. But these are not the issues that inform my understanding of Blake’s *revision of narrative*. I am looking at how a particular story changes over time in several poems; the text of these versions does not vary from copy to copy. For example, although the look of the plate that contains the version of the story in *The Book of Urizen* changes, the text of the story remains the same. The question that attends revision in this chapter is not why did Blake revise the story of limited perception, or even, what do these revisions tell us about the poet, but rather, what is the

relationship between Blake's practice of revising this narrative and the story itself?

Blake repeatedly revised a narrative about limited, or contracted, perception over twenty years in *The Book of Urizen* (1794), *The Four Zoas* (c. 1796-1807?), *Milton* (c. 1804-1815), and *Jerusalem* (c. 1804-1820). If we think of revision as a teleological process in which the author alters something until satisfied that it is in its final form, then we might expect the last version of this narrative in *Jerusalem* to be the most comprehensible and comprehensive. It is, in fact, it is the most incomprehensible, contracted, and obscure version of the story. The "final" version of this narrative is just the repetition of a clause, "they became what they beheld," that makes little sense unless we read it in the context of its earlier versions. Blake's practice of narrative revision, then, establishes an intertextual system of relation in which our understanding of one version is contingent upon its other versions. In order to understand "what they beheld" and what "they became" in *Jerusalem*, we need to read earlier textual and visual versions of this narrative in *The Book of Urizen*, *The Four Zoas*, and *Milton*. Ultimately, we will see that Blake's practice of contracting, or abbreviating, successive versions of this story is figured in the story itself: both perceptual and textual contraction make expansive vision possible through the repetition of a minute particular in which we might behold the transformative vision of *Jerusalem*.

Contracted Perception

Blake revised the narrative of contracted perception from roughly 1794 (*The Book of Urizen*) to 1815 (composition end date for *Jerusalem*).⁴⁴ The most comprehensive version of this narrative appears in *The Book of Urizen* (1794) when Los perceives Urizen.⁴⁵ In seven ages, reminiscent of the seven days of biblical creation, Los forges and limits Urizen into physical form: his spine “writh’d in torment” and bones “froze / Over all his nerves of joy” in the first Age (9.37, 39-41); a heart shot out veins and arteries in the second Age; his “nervous brain shot branches / Round the branches of his heart” and formed two eyes “fixed in two little caves,” or eye-sockets, in the third Age (10.11-12, 14); two ears formed in the fourth Age; two nostrils “bent down to the deep” in the Fifth Age (12.1); a “Tongue / Of thirst & of hunger appeard” in the sixth Age (12.8-9); his arms shot out to the north and south, and his feet “stampd” the “nether Abyss” in the seventh, and final, Age (12.16). At the beginning of Chapter V (Plate 12), Los “shrunk” in “terrors” from his task (12.20),

Then he look’d back with anxious desire
But the space undivided by existence
Struck horror into his soul.

6. Los wept obscur’d with mourning
His bosom earthquak’d with sighs
He saw Urizen deadly black
In his chains bound & Pity began

⁴⁴ The title pages to both *Milton* and *Jerusalem* are marked with the date 1804; most of *Jerusalem* was composed after *Milton*, probably completed by 1815 and etched from 1815-20 (see Erdman 806, 808, 809).

⁴⁵ *The Book of Urizen* contains two creation myths: that of Los and that of Urizen. According to David Worall, they both have originary status (*The Urizen Books* 21).

7. In anguish dividing & dividing
For pity divides the soul
In pangs eternity on eternity (12.45-54)

After lamenting the separation between himself and eternity, “the space undivided by existence,” Los perceived Urizen, bound in chains. Los’ division results both from seeing Urizen as divided from himself and from the emotion associated with this realization. Los became the division and separation he beheld. If we recall the admonition to mortal man in Plate 34 of *Jerusalem*, Los’ organs of perception are closed, or contracted, and the object of his perception, Urizen, seems closed as well. “Pity” began in Los as emotion and became a “round globe of blood / Trembling upon the void” (12.58-59) that “branched out into roots” and fibres, and eventually became a “female form trembling and pale” (16.2, 7). Pity, later called Enitharmon (Los’ emanation, or female counterpart), is Blake’s Eve figure. Los’ initial division did not cease: he continued “dividing & dividing.”

In *The Four Zoas*, a poem that he never engraved, Blake wrote a condensed version of this story that specifically refers to beholding and becoming, and highlights the expansive potential of contracted perception.⁴⁶ The dream vision of *The Four Zoas* lasts nine nights. On the fourth night,

The Prophet of Eternity beat on his iron links & links of brass
And as he beat round the hurtling Demon. terrified at the Shapes
Enslavd humanity put on he became what he beheld.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ See Erdman 816-818 and Damon 142-44.

⁴⁷ *The Four Zoas: Night the Fourth*, pg. 53, 22-4 (Erdman 336).

Los began the task of binding Urizen, the “Demon,” by “beat[ing] round” him. “[T]errified” by Urizen’s “enslavd” human form (as he is in *The Book of Urizen*), Los “became what he beheld.” When Los shrunk from his task,

Pale terror siezd the Eyes of Los as he beat round
The hurtling Demon. terrified at the shapes
Enslavd humanity put on he became what he beheld
He became what he was doing he was himself transformd⁴⁸

Here, Los’s perception of Urizen is linked to his act of limiting Urizen: he became the limitation he created and beheld. In *The Book of Urizen* Blake only describes the consequences of Los’ contracted perception; in *The Four Zoas* he not only introduces the phrase “he became what he beheld,” but also elaborates it. Moreover, this version in *The Four Zoas* is the only one in which Blake explicitly refers to Los’ contracted perception of Urizen as reflexively transformative. Interestingly, *The Four Zoas* version does not include a description of the globe of blood that became the pale, female form. Blake did, however, make a note to “Bring in here the Globe of Blood as in the B of Urizen”; in compliance, Erdman inserts lines from *The Book of Urizen*, changing them to “suit the meter” of *The Four Zoas*:

The globe of life blood trembled Branching out into roots;
Fibrous, writhing upon the winds; Fibres of blood, milk and tears;
In pangs, eternity on eternity. At length in tears & cries imbodyed
A female form trembling and pale Waves before his deathly
face⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *The Four Zoas: Night the Fourth*, pg. 55, 20-23 (Erdman 338).

⁴⁹ *The Four Zoas: Night the Fourth*, pg. 55, 24-27 (338). Erdman notes that previous editors have “shirked their duty” with respect to Blake’s instruction here, and he renumbers the lines that follow this insertion (833).

Although the appearance and elaboration of “he became what he beheld” in *The Four Zoas* version of this story is its most important feature, the indication that the globe of blood from *The Book of Urizen* was to be brought in further emphasizes both the connection between these first two versions and the causal connection between contracted perception and self-division.

An even shorter version of the story of limited perception appears at the beginning of *Milton*. We learn that Los limited Urizen in physical form in a passage that repeats the same progression of seven ages from *The Book of Urizen*, but no explicit reference to Los’s perception of Urizen follows:

Terrified Los stood in the Abyss & his immortal limbs
Grew deadly pale; he became what he beheld: for a red
Round globe sunk down from his Bosom into the Deep in pangs
He hoverd over it trembling & weeping. suspended it shook
The nether Abyss in tremblings. he wept over it, he cherish’d it
In deadly sickening pain: till separated into a Female pale
(l.2(b).28-33)

We can infer that Los perceived Urizen in these lines, and a reading of the earlier versions of this story supports such an assumption. Here, Los became what he beheld only once, but repetition and elaboration are still important parts of the passage: Los weeps twice and the repetition of the word “deadly” amplifies the terror of the encounter. Here we see for the first time Los’s emotional and physical reaction to the globe of blood: his trembling is transferred to the divided globe, whose “tremblings” affect the “nether Abyss.” The conclusion of this version suggests that in spite of his pain and anguish, Los has a deep affection for the globe of blood—he “cherish’d” it until it became a wholly separate, and female, form. As he does in the *The Book of Urizen* version, Los continued dividing: “from his Back / A blue fluid exuded in

Sinews hardening” and separated into his spectre, a “Male Form howling in Jealousy” (2[b].34-36).

Blake’s revision of this story of contracted perception on plates 34 and 36 of *Jerusalem* concerns the story of Los’s bending of Reuben’s senses, which is similar to the story of Los’s limitation of Urizen in physical form. Reuben is the fifth of Los’ sixteen sons; he is without structure and, as Morton Paley notes, a “mass of chaotic appetite” who “would rather sleep in the womb of Nature than awaken to life in order to realize his own form.”⁵⁰ Blake’s Reuben is based on the Biblical Reuben, who is easily corrupted, “unstable as water” (Genesis 49:3-4), and represents what W.H. Stevenson calls “the typical weaknesses of fallen man.”⁵¹ Paley argues that Los engages in two main tasks in *Jerusalem*—dividing and fixing—“in order to establish a structure of meaning in the fallen world” (*The Continuing City* 269). On plate 34 we learn that Los sent Reuben across Jordan four times, toward Jerusalem, so that he might stay there and transcend materiality, renounce his selfhood, and realize his imaginative capacity. It may seem paradoxical that Los would fix, or bind, Reuben’s senses if he must cast off materiality, but Los must organize his senses in order for him to realize that they are illusory. Each time Los bent one of his senses (his nostrils, eyes, tongue, and ear), Reuben returned and fell asleep. The first time,

Los bended his Nostrils down to the Earth, then sent him over
Jordan to the Land of the Hittite: every-one that saw him
Fled! they fled at his horrible Form: they hid in caves

⁵⁰ *The Continuing City* 271, 270; see pp. 304-6 for Paley’s discussion of the synchronous structure of the Reuben narrative. Paley also notes that “Reuben is in many ways a microcosm of Albion,” the “Eternal Man” (304).

⁵¹ *Blake: The Complete Poems* 691; see also Genesis 30:14, 35:22.

And dens, they looked on one-another & became what they
beheld. (34[30].47-50)

When Los sent Reuben out a second time, “all terrified fled; they became what they beheld.” The third time, “All that beheld him fled howling and gnawed their tongues / For pain: they became what they beheld” (36[32].8-9). The fourth time Los sent Reuben out,

The Seven Nations fled before him they became what they
beheld
Hand, Hyle & Coban fled: they became what they beheld
Gwantock & Peachy hid in Damascus beneath Mount Lebanon
Brereton & Slade in Egypt. Hutton & Skofeld & Kox
Fled over Chaldea in terror in pains in every nerve
Kotope & Bowen became what they beheld, fleeing over the
Earth (36[32].14-19)

“They” repeatedly beheld Reuben, fled, and hid; the phrase “they became what they beheld” appears six times.⁵² The plural subject “they” becomes more particular with each repetition, moving from “every-one” to specific names. The Seven Nations are the tribes inhabiting the Promised Land before the Israelite invasion and the twelve names that follow are Albion’s twelve sons who escape (in the same order they are mentioned above) from his “bosom” when he falls asleep in *Jerusalem* 32[46]. Albion is the “Eternal Man” and *Jerusalem* tells the story of his fall and resurrection. “They” beheld Reuben over and over again, but what did they “become”?

In order to answer this question we need to explore the significance of the separation of the globe of blood that becomes the female Pity. In *The*

⁵² Although “they” behold Reuben and also look “on one-another” the first time, we can consider Reuben the object of their perception because “they” too are fallen, and “they” behold him every time. Later in *Jerusalem*, “Strucken with Albions disease they become what they behold; / They assimilate with Albion in pity & compassion; Their Emanations return not: their Spectres rage in the Deep” (II.44[39].32-34); see Paley’s note that “the Friends in their role as the cathedral cities of England are fellow sufferers” (*William Blake: Jerusalem* 201).

Book of Urizen, Los perceives Urizen and then both Pity and separation begin. Although Pity/Enitharmon initially divides the soul, she ultimately redeems, or reunites it. In other words, Pity is both the result of contraction and that which contains the possibility of expansion.⁵³ Woman makes redemption possible, as Blake explains in *Jerusalem*:

There is a limit of Opakeness, and a limit of Contraction:
In every Individual Man. and the limit of Opakeness.
Is named Satan: and the limit of Contraction is named Adam,
But when Man sleeps in Beulah, the Savior in mercy takes
Contractions Limit, and of the Limit he forms Woman: That
Himself may in process of time be born Man to redeem
(42.29-34)

In every man there is the “limit of Opakeness,” an “imperviousness to the divine light,” Satan—the Spectre of the Individual who represents Selfhood, and there is a “limit of Contraction,” called Adam (Damon 309). Eve, who is formed from “Contractions Limit,” makes possible the eventual embodiment of Jesus Christ. The repetition of generation will produce God incarnate, through whom Man might be redeemed. We should not forget that the perceptual contraction that results in the separation of the female from Los in *The Book of Urizen* is a horrific event. Even though Pity, a traditionally feminine attribute that “encourage[s] the imagination and heart to ‘know’ and empathize with its implacable enemies,” is an agent of entrapment and “undermines the integrity and strength of creative Energy,” according to Anne Mellor, Pity—and the

⁵³ Leopold Damrosch argues that though Enitharmon “tantalizes and frustrate[s]” Los later in *The Book of Urizen*, she is “considered a merciful limit to the fall” (*Symbol and Truth in Blake’s Myth* 183).

globe of blood and female form it eventually becomes—is an essential element of reunion, or redemption (163).⁵⁴

The illumination on Plate 35 of *Jerusalem* depicts the formation of “Contractions Limit” by the creator (Jesus with stigmata on his feet); Eve is indeed shown dividing from, yet still attached to, Adam.⁵⁵ This illumination of Eve links the story of limited perception in *Jerusalem* to the earlier version of the story in *The Book of Urizen*. What appears to be an arbitrary insertion into the Reuben narrative that appears on plates 34 and 36 turns out to be a visual version of the consequences of contracted perception analogous to the creation of Pity depicted in *The Book of Urizen*: there, the female figure sprouts from, or hovers above, the word “Pity,” and Los kneels, closed off and crouching before her, holding and hiding his head (plate 17).⁵⁶ Where we might expect the Reuben narrative on plate 34 of *Jerusalem* to be followed by a visual depiction of “they became what they beheld,” instead we find a visual depiction of the formation of Eve, who divided from Los as Pity when he “became what he beheld.” Thus, if we read the illumination of Eve’s embodiment on Plate 35 of *Jerusalem* intertextually as a visual version of the story of contracted perception, it underscores the importance of the story in

⁵⁴ Paul Mann argues that *The Book of Urizen* is itself “both a horror-zone of selfhood and a *saving remnant*, a limit of contraction.” His figuration of the book as both the perpetuation of contraction and limitation and that which contains the possibility of the limit of that contraction similarly applies here to the globe of blood that becomes Enitharmon (“The Book of Urizen and the Horizon of the Book,” *Unnam’d Forms* 59).

⁵⁵ The text of Plate 35 describes these “Two Limits”: “Then the Divine hand found the Two Limits, Satan and Adam, / In Albions bosom: for in every Human bosom those Limits stand” (35[31].1-2). See Paley’s discussion of Blake’s depiction of the creation of Eve by Jesus, instead of the father (*William Blake: Jerusalem* 185).

⁵⁶ Paley contends that Plate 35 “seems to have been inserted into the midst of the Los-Reuben episode” (*William Blake: Jerusalem* 186).

Jerusalem, especially the repetition of “they became what they beheld” on plates 34 and 36, and the importance of reading these two versions together.

According to Blake, the temporal world is a fallen world of error and delusion, and his concept of redemption can be understood in terms of perception: reunion is made possible through Jesus, in whom we might see “the Eternal Vision! the Divine Similitude!” (*Jerusalem* II.38[34].11). Contrary to the denial of resemblance inherent in a contracted perception that sees only the horror of individuation and limitation, the Divine Vision entails an expansive vision through which one sees a “Similitude” between the Divine and the human. In Jesus, one might behold both human and divine, and this vision expands to include “all things,” as Blake says in the “Application” of “There is No Natural Religion [b]”:

He who sees the Infinite in all things sees God. He who sees the Ratio only sees himself only. (*The Early Illuminated Books* 66)

Unbounded perception expands from an individual subject to “all things” to God; sense perception of and at the ratio reflects the subject back to itself. For Blake, *beholding necessarily entails becoming*: the nature of one’s perception determines what one becomes. “There is No Natural Religion [b]” ends: “Therefore / God becomes as we are, / that we may be as he / is” (*The Early Illuminated Books* 67). One who sees the Infinite in all things *beholds* God and *becomes* like God; one who sees only the ratio *beholds* himself as limited and *becomes* that limited ratio.

In all the versions of the narrative of contracted perception and division in *The Book of Urizen*, *The Four Zoas*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem*, Los’ organs of perception are closed. Both Urizen and Reuben are objects of perception and separate or limited bodies (Los limits the same final physical forms in both of

them). Since division results from Los' contracted perception in *The Book of Urizen*, *The Four Zoas*, and *Milton*, one could assume that when "they became what they beheld" in *Jerusalem*, they too became further divided.⁵⁷ But in *Jerusalem*, after "they" fled in terror and became what they beheld, what follows is not a description of "their" division, but a repetition of the scene of contracted perception. If Los' contracted perception of Urizen is analogous to "their" contracted perception of Reuben, then the division of the globe of blood is analogous to the *textual repetition* of the phrase "they became what they beheld." That is, the "dividing & dividing" that results from Los's contracted perception is figured as the repetition of "they became what they beheld" after "their" initial contracted perception of Reuben. Moreover, it is precisely Los' contracted perception of Urizen that makes expansive vision possible through the globe of blood that separates from him. Thus, expansive vision is actually contingent upon an initial contracted perception. If we recall Blake's *Vision of the Last Judgment*, "I question not my Corporeal or Vegetative Eye any more than I would Question a Window concerning a Sight. I look thro it & not with it," then we could say that contracted perception sees *with* the eye, while expansive vision sees *through* the eye. Again, it is not a matter of choosing one or the other because seeing with the eye makes seeing through the eye possible. Tilottama Rajan similarly reads Blake's phrase "the Eye altering alters all" from "The Mental Traveller": "[this] is not to claim that one must see 'through' and not 'with' the eye. Rather, it is to acknowledge that 'with' and 'through' are intertwined, because the eye is not just a window through which one sees into eternity but also a mirror that reflects itself" (212). Just as Los's

⁵⁷ Division occurs in other characters before and after Reuben is sent out: the Daughters of Albion divide Luvah before Los bends Reuben's senses, and Gwendolen divides after Reuben returns the first time (30[34].46, 52).

perception of Urizen reflects his own limited perception and results in the globe of blood that is also that which will eventually make expansive vision possible, the repetition “they became what they behold,” which is only visible to the reader, also reflects itself as a textual repetition that is also an object through which one might see a vision of *Jerusalem*.

Though readers of *Jerusalem* have certainly noticed the phrase “they became what they beheld,” its *repetition* has remained unexamined. In contemporary Romantic criticism, references to “they became what they beheld” appear without mention of its repetition and sometimes without mention of Blake at all. Paley’s commentary on this phrase consists of references outside Blake’s canon regarding the idea of becoming what one sees or thinks. He refers readers to Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound*, l.i.450-1: “Methinks I grow like what I contemplate / And laugh and stare in loathsome sympathy”; he also cites Percival’s note in *William Blake’s Circle of Destiny* comparing this phrase in *Jerusalem* to Plotinus—“Souls, while they contemplate diverse objects, are and become that which they contemplate” (319); and he concludes that “The common source is probably Book III of Plato’s *Republic*” (*William Blake: Jerusalem* 185). A similar expression can be found in the *Upanishads*, “What a man thinks, that he becomes” (*Maitin Upanishad*), and possibly even in Proverbs, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (23:7). Harriet Linkin uses Blake’s phrase to help explain the “reciprocal objectification” that occurs when Cupid sees Psyche in Mary Tighe’s *Psyche, or the Legend of Love* (1811). In her essay, “Romantic Aesthetics in Mary Tighe and Letitia Landon,” Linkin writes, “Cupid effectively becomes what he beholds when he views Psyche” (167). She does not cite Blake in her definition of reciprocal objectification, assuming the familiarity or transparency

of Blake's phrase. That this repetition in *Jerusalem* has not received critical attention makes Los' directive on Plate 34 even more imperative. Los asks the reader to become an active subject when he interrupts the Reuben narrative after the first repetition of "they became what they beheld." We behold this textual repetition as an object of perception according to the nature of our perceptive organs, which have indeed been critically closed. If our organs are not closed, if we expand our vision of this textual repetition, how might it and we transform?

Expansive Vision

"The very subject of Blake's art," W.J.T. Mitchell writes, "is [the] power to transform and reshape visual imagery, and, by implication, the ability of man to create his vision in general" (*Blake's Composite Art* 37). If we recall *The Four Zoas*, "they became what they beheld" is very much about transformation: beholding entails becoming. What might we behold in the repetition of "they became what they beheld," and what might we become? When Blake draws our attention to objects of perception, they are often figured as winged children. The winged child in *The Gates of Paradise*, who is the object of Aged Ignorance's contracted perception, is actually the third of three winged figures in progressive states of growth. When we look at the two other winged figures in *The Gates of Paradise*, we find that wings signify metamorphic potential.

Plate 6 of *The Gates of Paradise* depicts a winged infant emerging from a shell above the following lines: "At length for hatching ripe / he breaks the shell."⁵⁸ The corresponding lines from "The Keys of the Gates" are: "I rent the

⁵⁸ Mellor notes that the phrase at the bottom of the etching is from Dryden's translation of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* (*Blake's Human Form Divine* 75).

Veil where the Dead dwell / When weary Man enters his Cave / He meets his Saviour in the Grave / Some find a Female Garment there / And some a Male, woven with care / Lest the Sexual Garments sweet / Should grow a devouring Winding sheet" (20-25). As Paley notes in "The Figure of the Garment," if these sexual garments mediate our relationship to the Divine, one would expect the figure of the garment "to be dispensed with at the Last Judgment" (*Blake's Sublime Allegory* 138). In his reading of the ambiguous garment-status of Blake's illuminations of resurrected figures he writes, "Presumably the weaving of garments is not going to stop in Eternity" (ibid.). Blake asserts in *Jerusalem* that "Man in the Resurrection changes his Sexual Garments at will / Every Harlot was once a Virgin: every Criminal an Infant Love!" (III.61.51-2). When the winged infant "breaks the shell," he expands beyond the confines of physical limitation and sexual difference.⁵⁹ Mellor argues that the winged infant breaking his shell represents the immortal soul breaking the bounds of its physical body as a "butterfly emerging from a cocoon" (75). Her comparison of the winged infant to the emerging butterfly is supported by the image of an even younger child asleep and bound in chrysalis form on the frontispiece of *The Gates of Paradise*. The wings of this infant are butterfly wings in pupa form. Whereas we referred to the winged child in *The Gates of Paradise* as fly-like before, we can now consider that he has butterfly wings. The distinction between flies and butterflies in Blake's poetry is minimal: indeed, Damon simply states, "the fly in Blake's writings is a butterfly," and he notes that "The Fly" from *Songs of Experience* "originally had 'gilded, painted pride'" (Damon 139). In Plate 11 of *The Gates of Paradise* Aged Ignorance's

⁵⁹ Sexes do not exist in Eternity because "Humanity is completely one with his emanation" (Damon 367).

contracted perception threatens to clip the wings that signify vision and transformation.

Winged objects of perception in Blake's work are typically in a state of metamorphosis, and if we look closer at *Jerusalem*, we find that Jerusalem—the word and the figure—has butterfly wings. On the title page lies Jerusalem figured as a sleeping woman with elaborate wings resembling those of a butterfly.⁶⁰ In plate 86 (which has no graphic figures), Jerusalem, who is Albion's emanation in the poem, is "Wingd with Six Wings" (IV.86.1). In Jerusalem's wings, metamorphosis and vision coincide: on the title page, her wings are marked by two black spots (in addition to other spots) that resemble eyes. In contrast, the Covering Cherub, in which Jerusalem is hidden, and who is the "image / Of Selfhood" revealed in *Jerusalem* 89, has "Wings black filld with Eyes." But these are "eyeless Wings" because they obscure one's vision of God (IV.89.28.41). "Eyeless wings" can be compared to figures with bat wings. Mellor links the image of bat wings to Spectres like Satan and Urizen. Of special interest is the figure of Satan at the end of *The Gates of Paradise* (plate 19), who has two black circles on his bat wings and hovers above the sleeping traveler.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Paley calls this female figure on the title page an "analogue," and says that "this analogy does not oblige us to identify figures with specific players in the drama to come. This beautiful lepidopterous form is one of the Fairies to which Blake refers in 'To the Public.' She bears a relation to the figure of Jerusalem that a Hopi Kachina bears to the dancer it represents—the dancer who in turn represents a divine figure, just as Jerusalem is a symbol of the indwelling power that Blake sometimes calls by the shorthand term 'Liberty'" (*Jerusalem* 131).

⁶¹ Mellor cites a correspondence in which Erdman suggests that "this pathetic creature pretends to control the entire universe . . . but scurries away in fear and confusion at the first glimpse of the sun rising behind the mountains"; she also links Satan's darkened bat wings to "the cruel spectre of Moloch who flees in defeat at the birth of Christ" in *The Flight of Moloch*, Blake's illustration for Milton's Ode "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" (*Blake's Human Form Divine* 233).

As a visual artist, Blake very knew well that perception is radically particular: I see an object differently from you, and I also see it differently each time I see it. Los' interruption on Plate 34 of *Jerusalem* requires the reader to consider the relationship between organs and objects of perception. Because our recognition of the repetition of "they became what they beheld" varies (and closes) as our organs vary, perhaps we initially see it simply as a repetition, "a dull round." But we are asked to look again. When we see this textual repetition as an object of perception in the company of other winged and human objects of perception, we participate in the same visual transformation *Jerusalem* describes. In the last chapter of *Jerusalem*, Los cries at his anvil,

he who wishes to see a Vision; a perfect Whole
Must see it in its Minute Particulars. (IV.91.20-21)

Minute particulars are the keys to perception in William Blake's mythopoetic system. S. Foster Damon notes that they are "the outward expression in this world of the eternal individualities of all things" (280). In *Jerusalem* Blake writes, "General Forms have their vitality in Particulars & every / Particular is a Man; a Divine Member of the Divine Jesus" (IV.91.29-30). In other words, men are the minute particulars of God, who contains all "General Forms."⁶² In his assessment of critical analyses of *Jerusalem* Paley argues that "Schematic analyses of *Jerusalem* fail because none of them account for the Minute Particulars of the work" (*The Continuing City* 284).⁶³ If we consider *Jerusalem*

⁶² God, or the "Divine Humanity," is "the Only General and Universal Form" (*Jerusalem* II.43[38].19-20).

⁶³ See *The Continuing City* 304-314 (esp. 310-11) for Paley's discussion of *Jerusalem*'s synchronous form and narrative. Paley also cites other structural models for *Jerusalem*, including "antiform" (W. J. T. Mitchell, *Blake's Composite Art* 169-70); Ezekiel (Bloom, "Blake's *Jerusalem*: The Bard of Sensibility and the Form of Prophecy," *The Ringers in the Tower* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1971) 65-79), the Biblical Fall, redemption, and apocalypse (Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*, 357-8), Revelation (Joseph A. Wittreich, Jr., "Opening the Seals: Blake's

itself as a “General Form,” then the repetition of “they became what they beheld” is a minute particular through which we might see its “Vision.” When Jesus appears at the end of *Jerusalem*, Albion beholds “the Universal Humanity” as a “Man” (IV.96.5-6):

every Word & Every Character
Was Human according to the Expansion or Contraction, the
Translucence or
Opakeness of Nervous fibres such was the variation of Time &
Space
Which vary according as the Organs of Perception vary & they
walked
To & fro in Eternity as One Man reflecting each in each & clearly
seen
And seeing: according to fitness & order. (IV.98.35-40)

The reflexive nature of Blakean perception reveals that we are the object we behold, minute, particular, and clothed in winged, human, and textual beauty.

Epics and the Milton Tradition,” *Blake’s Sublime Allegory* 23-58), and the Synoptic Gospels (Witke, “*Jerusalem: a Synoptic Poem*,” *Comparative Literature* XXII (1970): 265-78). See also Stuart Curran, “The Structures of *Jerusalem*” and Karl Kroeber, “Delivering *Jerusalem*” in *Blake’s Sublime Allegory* 329-346 and 347-367, respectively.

CHAPTER THREE

Witness and Restoration in Wordsworth's "Poem to Coleridge"

The Prelude owes its inception to Wordsworth's collaboration with Coleridge: in 1797-8 they conceived of a poetic project called *The Recluse* which, as Wordsworth notes in the Preface to *The Excursion* (1814), was to be a "philosophical poem, containing views of Man, Nature, and Society" (*The Poetical Works* 8: 4).⁶⁴ The "preparatory poem," as Wordsworth called it, "is biographical, and conducts the history of the Author's mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently matured for entering upon the arduous labour which he had proposed to himself; and the two Works have the same kind of relation to each other...as the ante-chapel has to the body of a gothic church" (*The Poetical Works* 8: 4). The "gothic church" that was to be *The Recluse* was never built, but under the pressure of such a task he wrote and revised the preparatory "Poem, Title not yet fixed upon, by William Wordsworth, Addressed to S.T. Coleridge" over the next forty years.⁶⁵

Wordsworth revised this "Poem to Coleridge" in one- to two-year bursts: he wrote a two-part poem in 1798-99, which he substantially revised in 1804, 1805-1806, 1818-1820, 1832, and 1839. Only after his death in April 1850 did his wife Mary publish the poem as *The Prelude, or Growth of a Poet's Mind; An Autobiographical Poem*. Wordsworth's 1798-1799 two-part poem consists of 978 lines in which the poet explores the formative nature of his childhood

⁶⁴ *The Excursion* was to be the second part of this three-part poem.

⁶⁵ Wordsworth gave the poem this title in 1805-1806: see MS. B (DC MS. 53), 4r (*The Thirteen-Book Prelude* 1: 1168). He changed the title to "POEM, Title not fixed upon, by William Wordsworth, Addressed to his Friend, S.T. Coleridge" in 1818-1820 (MS. C, p. iii; *The Thirteen-Book Prelude* II: 1048).

experiences (First Part) and his adolescence (Second Part). Wordsworth revised the two-part poem in early 1804, and planned to expand it to include five books (which would have extended the story of the poet's life through his attendance at Cambridge University), but he abandoned the five-book plan by March 1804, and expanded the poem into thirteen books. The 1805-1806 thirteen-book poem includes the poet's experiences in France, and of the French Revolution; his crisis of faith, conscience, and imagination in the aftermath of the Revolution; and his gradual recovery. Wordsworth made substantial revisions to the thirteen-book poem in 1818-1820. In 1832, he produced a fourteen-book poem, which reflects a structural change he had been working on since 1805 (the division of Book X into two books) and this version went through a further stage of revision in 1839.⁶⁶

Although literary critics have had access to more than one version of *The Prelude* since 1926 (when Ernest de Selincourt published the 1850 version and the 1805-6 version on facing pages), the conversation about them has often focused on which one is best. When scholars made claims for "the relative merits of the 1805 and 1850 *Prelude* texts" at the 1984 Wordsworth Conference and *Prelude* Colloquium, many thought Wordsworth's revisions were a disappointment, not an improvement.⁶⁷ In particular, the consensus about Wordsworth's revision of an episode called "waiting for the horses" was largely negative. Norman Fruman argued that the revised ending of the 1850 episode creates a "flaccid conclusion [that] actually undercuts the importance

⁶⁶ The fourteen-book poem also omits from the Vaudracour and Julia episode, which was published separately in 1820.

⁶⁷ Lindenberger, Fruman, Barth, and others, "Waiting for the Palfreys: The Great *Prelude* Debate," *The Wordsworth Circle* 17.1 (1986): 1. Further citations from this source will be indicated by "Palfreys."

of the whole experience”; Nicholas Roe asserted that Wordsworth’s 1850 revision “trivialises” the “marvellous conclusion” of 1805; and Harriet Jump agreed, saying that the ending is “weakened in the 1850 version” (Palfreys 10, 33-34). The present chapter looks closely at the multiple versions of the “waiting for the horses” episode written from 1798-99 to 1839 and calls these kinds of evaluative arguments into question. An understanding of poetic revision as simply a textual process that makes the poem “better” misses crucial elements and points of view that contribute to its meaning. Each time Wordsworth revised the episode, he beheld it again and saw it in a new light. Instead of arguing about which version is better, or stronger (or more virile), I set out here to explore the ways in which revision impacts all versions of the “waiting for the horses” episode.

An essential element that critics cannot help but miss when they consider only one version of the “waiting for the horses” episode, or when they focus intently on comparative evaluation, is the absence of an address to Coleridge in later versions. In order to contextualize Wordsworth’s reframing and eventual removal of the address to Coleridge in the “waiting for the horses” episode, the present chapter will first focus on Wordsworth’s removal of a citation of Coleridge’s poetry in Book I of *The Prelude*. Reading among versions here involves recognizing that omissions are just as important as other kinds of textual alteration: Coleridge’s textual absence ultimately impacts our understanding of Wordsworth’s presence as a witness to his own story of imaginative restoration.

In the first few lines of the 1798-1799 two-part poem, Wordsworth self-consciously borrows Coleridge’s poetic language:

Was it for this
That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved
To blend his murmurs with my Nurse's song,
And from his alder shades, and rocky falls,
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
That flowed along my dreams? For this didst Thou,
O Derwent, travelling over the green plains
Near my "sweet birth-place," didst thou, beauteous Stream
Make ceaseless music through the night and day,
Which with its steady cadence tempering
Our human waywardness, composed my thoughts
To more than infant softness, giving me,
Among the fretful dwellings of mankind,
A knowledge, a dim earnest of the calm
Which Nature breathes among the fields and groves?
(1-15, First Part, *The Prelude*, 1798-1799)

These opening rhetorical questions foreground Wordsworth's poetic origins in Nature, implicitly acknowledge the poem he planned to write (*The Recluse*), and inaugurate the poem that would become a life's work. Coleridge is both implied auditor and ideal reader, and his importance is made explicit at the outset through a citation. In the poet's recollection of his origins we hear the echo of the speaker in Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight" musing about his early memories of home:

With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt
Of my sweet birth-place, and the old church-tower,
Whose bells, the poor man's only music, rang
From morn to evening, all the hot Fair-day,
So sweetly, that they stirred and haunted me
With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear
Most like articulate sounds of things to come! (27-33)⁶⁸

For both poets, sounds of home travel through memories and dreams: while the music of the river taught Wordsworth temperance and restraint, and

⁶⁸ "Frost at Midnight" in "Texts and Apparatuses," *Coleridge and Textual Instability* 156.

ultimately led him to a deep understanding of the tranquility of Nature, the ringing church bells roused and “haunted” Coleridge with intimations of the future. Though these sounds had different effects on each poet, they had a similar source in “ceaseless music.” Wordsworth’s inclusion of the phrase, “my sweet birth-place,” draws the reader’s attention (specifically Coleridge’s attention) to their intimate poetic connection.

When Wordsworth revised his poem in 1818-1820, he drew a straight line in pencil next to the lines containing this reference to Coleridge’s “Frost at Midnight.” Mark Reed suggests that this notation probably marked these lines for reconsideration, and eventual deletion (*The Thirteen-Book Prelude* 2: 499). The phrase “my sweet birth-place”⁶⁹ is no longer present in the 1832 version:

For this didst Thou,
O Derwent! winding among grassy holms
Where I was looking on, a Babe in arms,
Make ceaseless music, that composed my thoughts
To more than infant softness, giving me
Amid the fretful dwellings of mankind
A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm
That Nature breathes among the hills and groves.
(l.274-81, *The Fourteen-Book Prelude*)

The absence of Coleridge’s poetic language is striking: instead of recalling the river that flowed near his “sweet birth-place,” here the poet recalls the river that flowed “among grassy holms” (or islands) where the poet-as-infant “was looking on.” Here, the poet sees himself more clearly as “a Babe in arms” watching the meandering river and hearing its sounds. There is more explicit distance between poet and infant in this later version, and there is a stronger sense that Wordsworth is witnessing his own memory. In the even later

⁶⁹ The phrase does not even appear as part of a crossed-out line in the manuscript; see MS. D, Book I, p. 18 (*The Fourteen-Book Prelude* 381).

version of these lines (1839), Coleridge's presence is not reintroduced. What we learn, then, from the multiple versions of this brief passage, is that Wordsworth's removal of a reference to Coleridge is linked to a reframing of memory that needs no other witnesses.

This particular instance of textual revision is part of a larger, more complex practice of reframing recollections and removing references to Coleridge.⁷⁰ In the "waiting for the horses" episode, the poet reflects on the memory of waiting anxiously as an adolescent schoolboy for horses to take him home for the Christmas holidays. This memory is linked to his father's death, and eventually becomes a source of imaginative restoration. In early versions of the episode, Coleridge is addressed as a sympathetic reader of the poem. In later versions he is invoked as an active participant to witness the poet's restoration in different ways. However, in the latest versions (1832 and 1839), an address to Coleridge does not frame the episode. In its absence we find the poet witnessing his own imaginative restoration.

⁷⁰ For another example, see the poet's recollection of first meeting his "most precious Friend" who "didst lend a living help / To regulate [his] soul" (X. 905-907; *The Thirteen-Book Prelude* 1: 291). In 1818-1820 the lines focus on the poet through the figure of his sister, Dorothy, "the beloved Woman" who "Maintain'd" for the poet "a saving intercourse / With [his] true self" (X.943, 949-50; *The Thirteen-Book Prelude* 2: 197-98). Wordsworth did not reintroduce Coleridge in these lines in 1832 or 1839. (The editors of the Norton *Prelude* note that this point in the chronology of the poet's life (the early 1790s) is inaccurate: he met Coleridge in 1795, but "can have exerted no great influence upon each other until June 1797" (408). The implication is that Wordsworth deleted the reference because it was inaccurate, but chronological accuracy is not a guiding principle of the poem: see Wordsworth's reference to specific dates that alter the past in Book VII.1-13.)

There are, of course, instances where Wordsworth does not remove references to Coleridge: see the subtle revision of XIII.246-48 (*The Thirteen-Book Prelude* 1: 319) in XVI.275-77 (*The Fourteen-Book Prelude* 266): the reference to Coleridge remains, but his intimate "loving Soul" becomes more distanced in the revised "capacious Soul," which focuses not on the act of loving, but the soul's ability to contain, or comprehend multitudes. See also II.452-467 (*The Fourteen-Book Prelude*), which maintains another citation from "Frost at Midnight" (present in versions of the poem from 1798-99 onward), and reframes the figure of Coleridge through revision: he is a diligent minister in "Nature's Temple," instead of "The most intense of Nature's worshippers."

We will look at six versions of the “waiting for the horses” episode: 1) lines 330-74 in the First Part of the two-part poem (MS. V, 1799); 2) Book XI.342-97 (MS. Z, 1805); 3) Book XI.342-97 (MS. A, 1805-1806); 4) Book XI.323-372 (MS. A, C-stage revision, 1818-1820); 5) Book XII.284-335 (MS. D, 1832); and 6) Book XII.284-335 (MS. E, 1839). Because an address to Coleridge is a crucial part of later versions—either as an introduction, or conclusion—we will look at both the “waiting for the horses” episode and the address to Coleridge that concludes the First Part of the 1798-1799 two-part poem. Even though this particular address does not become a part of subsequent versions of the episode, it will give us a sense of how Wordsworth addresses Coleridge in the first version only sixty-eight lines after the episode. As the conclusion to the 1799 First Part, the position of the address will also be important for our reading of later versions, all of which conclude the section in which they appear.

The first version of the episode, which appears toward the end of the First Part of the 1798-1799 poem.

One Christmas-time,
 The day before the holidays began,
 Feverish, and tired and restless, I went forth
 Into the fields, impatient for the sight
 Of those three horses which should bear us home,
 My Brothers and myself. There was a crag,
 An eminence which from the meeting-point
 Of two highways ascending overlooked
 At least a long half-mile of those two roads,
 By each of which the expected steeds might come,
 The choice uncertain. Thither I repaired
 Up to the highest summit; 'twas a day
 Stormy, and rough, and wild, and on the grass
 I sate, half-sheltered by a naked wall;
 Upon my right hand was a single sheep,
 A whistling hawthorn on my left, and there,
 Those two companions at my side, I watched

With eyes intensely straining, as the mist
 Gave intermitting prospects of the wood
 And plain beneath. Ere I to school returned
 That dreary time, ere I had been ten days
 A dweller in my father's house, he died,
 And I and my two Brothers, orphans then,
 Followed his body to the grave. The event
 With all the sorrow which it brought appeared
 A chastisement; and when I called to mind
 That day so lately passed, when from the crag
 I looked in such anxiety of hope,
 With trite reflections of morality
 Yet with the deepest passion I bowed low
 To God, who thus corrected my desires;
 And afterwards the wind, and sleety rain,
 And all the business of the elements,
 The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,
 And the bleak music of that old stone wall,
 The noise of wood and water, and the mist
 Which on the line of each of those two roads
 Advanced in such indisputable shapes,
 All these were spectacles and sounds to which
 I often would repair, and thence would drink
 As at a fountain, and I do not doubt
 That in this later time when storm and rain
 Beat on my roof at midnight, or by day
 When I am in the woods, unknown to me
 The workings of my spirit thence are brought.
 (l.330-374, *The Prelude*, 1798-99)⁷¹

There are five temporal layers to this memory: 1) the day on which the schoolboy is waiting to be taken home for the Christmas holidays; 2) the day

⁷¹ These lines are written in Dorothy Wordsworth's hand. A draft of the "waiting for the horses" episode does not survive: Stephen Parrish explains that its "inclusion...has to be inferred" from a note Wordsworth made about the total number of lines in a notebook, MS. 16 (*The Prelude*, 1798-1799 20-21). In other words, a draft of "waiting for the horses" was most likely part of MS. 16, and then copied later by Dorothy into MS. V. Wordsworth wrote about his father's death in 1787 when he was seventeen in "The Vale of Esthwaite." In this poem we find what could be considered the first version of the "waiting for the horses" episode, but this chapter does not focus on this version because it doesn't relate to Wordsworth's revisions of Coleridge's functional presence in *The Prelude*. For a brief discussion of Wordsworth's thoughts on his own death in "The Vale of Esthwaite," see Johnston, *The Hidden Wordsworth* 94; for a biographical reading of the poem see Duncan Wu, "Wordsworth's Poetry of Grief," *Wordsworth Circle* 21.3 (1990): 114-17.

of his father's death (December 30, 1783); 3) the time soon after his father's death; 4) a series of moments from adult life when this childhood memory came to mind, while the man (who was that child) was exposed to similar conditions of climate or landscape; 5) and the present moment of reflection. The poet recalls one day before the holidays when he was "restless" and "impatient" for a glimpse of the horses that would take him (and his brothers) home. He then describes the view from a crag: situated above "the meeting point / Of two highways," one can see "At least a long half-mile" of both roads—on either of which the horses might come. The boy "repaired" to the crag's highest point and sat on the grass only "half-sheltered" from the stormy day. With "two companions"—"a single sheep" and "a whistling hawthorn"—on either side of him, he watched the two roads; but the mist complicated, and compounded the uncertainty of, his vision of the scene beneath. The narrative then shifts forward abruptly: there is no mention of the horses' arrival, or the boys' travel. Time telescopes and we learn that less than ten days later, and before he returned to school, the boy's father died. He subsequently remembers that he then considered the "event" of his father's death a "chastisement" for his impatient desire to go home; he bowed before God, who "corrected [his] desires."

Most readings of this episode hinge on a psychoanalytic interpretation of the speaker's sense of guilt over his father's death. In "Wordsworth at the Crossroads," Alan Richardson argues that the boy, like "Oedipus, whose drama was for Freud that of all of us," found himself at a "crossroads (the 'meeting-point / Of two highways') and there caused his father's death through the strength and impatience of desire" (18). According to Eugene Stelzig, "there is both a residue of infantile narcissism—the adolescent boy's 'desires'

brought about the dire event—as well as an element of Oedipal guilt: the father dies, the son’s wishes are at once fulfilled and chastised by a God (the Father?) hardly ever invoked in *The Prelude*” (536-37). Wordsworth’s reference to God in this episode also seems “uncharacteristic” to John Ellis: “one of the less orthodox powers [presides] over nearly all the other important experiences of his childhood. ...[and] not even in his most pessimistic moments does he conceive of the deity as testing mankind with sadistically timed misfortune—his Puritanism doesn’t take that gloomy form” (19). The anomalous appearance of an Old-Testament-like God adds to the opacity of this episode which, as Stelzig remarks, is fairly “unilluminating as to the boy’s feelings and state of mind about the loss of his father” (535). Ellis discusses the episode both in terms of the father/son relationship (especially the resonance of *Hamlet*) and as a “strategy...for neutralizing the threat of death” (109).⁷² For Ellis, the story of Wordsworth’s life is punctuated by the poetic struggle of a psyche coming to terms with past traumatic events. If we agree with Ellis, then the adult’s memory of these childhood events distances him from feeling the pain of his father’s death so sharply, and from the knowledge of his own mortality. The poet’s remembrance of this feeling of guilt is an important feature of the story because it links the father’s death to the day the boy waited for the horses, and it is the memory of *this* day that he later recalls.

The poet says he “often would repair” to the initial scene, and his recollection amplified its “spectacles and sound”: the stone wall, that only “half-sheltered” the boy, resonated with “bleak music”; and there was a “noise of wood and water.” In the initial account, the boy strains to see through the mist,

⁷² Compare *Hamlet* I.iv.43: “Thou com’st in such a questionable shape,” with “Advanced in such indisputable shapes” (267). For his full discussion see pp. 17-34.

which acts as a gauze or film that only allows him a partial view of the landscape behind it; in the later layer of memory the adult poet recalls that the boy imagined the mist, not as a block to perception, but as something that formed shapes on a road where he expected to see the horses. These were the sights and sounds to which he would return again and again and from which he would “drink / As at a fountain” (369-70). The narrative returns to the present and concludes: in “this later time,” when his surroundings remind him of that moment of waiting for the horses, the “workings” of his spirit are brought to him from this place of memory. The final two lines of the episode are difficult to paraphrase, although Wordsworth glosses the phrase “the workings of my spirit” in later versions. Here, he says that two exemplary conditions (among many) trigger this memory—“storm and rain,” reminiscent of the “stormy” day on which the boy waited, and being “in the woods,” a potentially solitary place—and unconsciously (or in some other unknown way), something spiritual and inwardly felt comes to him.

The sixty-eight lines that intervene between the “waiting for the horses” episode and the concluding address to Coleridge in the 1799 version (MS. V) record the speaker’s general reflections about his early days, when “the earth / And common face of Nature spake to [him] / Rememberable things” (418-20). He explains that scenes from childhood became “habitually dear, and all / Their hues and forms were by invisible links / Allied to the affections” (l.440-42). The “invisible” connection between these particular scenes and the poet’s feelings recalls his description of “spots of time” that “invisibly [repair]” (l.294) the mind:

There are in our existence spots of time
Which with distinct pre-eminence retain
A fructifying virtue, whence, depressed

By trivial occupations and the round
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds
(Especially the imaginative power)
Are nourished, and invisibly repaired.
(l.288-294, *The Prelude*, 1798-1799)

Spots of time, such as the “waiting for the horses episode,” are typically narrative moments in which the poet remembers an event from childhood when his anxious expectation was interrupted by a shock, or surprise, and subsequently realizes through this memory his deep, imaginative connection with Nature. They are moments from the past that, when recalled in adult life, “invisibly [repair]” his mind. When we are “depressed / By trivial occupations,” the dullness of a day-to-day existence, the act of remembering these spots of time sustains the imagination. Wordsworth describes a similar kind of restoration in “Tintern Abbey,” which he wrote in July 1798, only a few months before he began writing the two-part poem. Although “Tintern Abbey” recalls the poet’s thoughts and feelings in 1793, when he was twenty-three years old, its compositional proximity to, and autobiographical affinity with, the 1798-99 poem underscore their similarity.⁷³ In “Tintern Abbey,” the poet explains that his memory of this place brought on “that blessed mood, / In which the burthen of the mystery, / In which the heavy and the weary weight / Of all this unintelligible world / Is lightened” (37-41). The depleted, or impaired, condition that Wordsworth refers to in the 1798-1799 two-part poem does not have these more notable elements of burden and weight; it is all a generalized “round” of pluralized and unspecified “occupations” and “ordinary intercourse.” What we can glean from Wordsworth’s description of the effect of such memories in “Tintern Abbey” is that we are most in need of nourishment—the

⁷³ See Parrish’s discussion of “Tintern Abbey” in *The Prelude*, 1798-1799 7-9.

“fructifying” (or productive) virtue of the spots of time—when the weight of the world bears down upon us.⁷⁴

The “waiting for the horses” episode involves two kinds of repair: the invisible restoration of the imagination inherent in spots of time, and the poet’s return to memory. As a young adolescent the speaker “repaired / Up to the highest summit” of the crag, and later he says that he “often would repair” to the “spectacles and sounds” of that day (I.340-1, 368-9). While spots of time repair the imagination in the sense that they restore it (Fr. *reparer*), here the speaker repairs to the crags and to his memory in the sense that he goes, or returns, to them (Fr. *repairer*). This latter sense of repair comes from the earlier word *repadrer*, which comes from the Late Latin *repatriare*, meaning to return to one’s country: one’s country is the *patria*, the fatherland. The speaker returns (more than once) to a mental space in which he remembers going to a physical place—both landscapes are indeed intimately bound up with the father. In subsequent versions of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth frequently uses the word repair to indicate a return: the poet repairs to “A grey stone / Of native rock” in II.33-34; he remembers that as a child he was afraid and would not have “repair’d” to the spot in the woods where a “black rock” shined mysteriously (VIII.579, 566); and the poet “repair’d” to the “Palace Walk / Of Orleans” in X.83-84 (1805-1806).⁷⁵ What I want to point to is the unique

⁷⁴ Wordsworth’s revisions of the passage highlight the restorative aspect of the spots of time: in all later versions of line 290 the inherent virtue of the spots of time is “renovating,” instead of “fructifying.” In an early draft Wordsworth uses the word “vivifying” (MS. Z [11v], *The Thirteen-Book Prelude* 2: 446), but changes it to “renovating” shortly thereafter (MS. A [301r], *The Thirteen-Book Prelude* 2: 929).

⁷⁵ In VIII.579 in MS. D (1832), Wordsworth omits the word repair, but maintains the sense of going to a place, “Nor could I have been bribed to disenchant / The Spectacle, by visiting the Spot” (VIII.419-20). See also “An Inhabitant // to the spot repair’d / With the intent to visit him: he reached / The house” in IX.913-19, part of *Vaudracour and Julia* published as a separate poem in 1820 and omitted from *The Prelude* in MS. D.

interdependence of the two meanings of repair in the “waiting for the horses” episode: the poet’s return to the particular memory of waiting for the horses, and his return to the time and place both before and after his father’s death, restores his imagination.

Although the effect of the poet’s restoration, what he experiences when he remembers that day he waited for the horses, remains fairly obscure in this first version of the episode (“unknown to me / The workings of my spirit thence are brought”), Wordsworth expands upon the idea of restoration in subsequent versions in an address to Coleridge. We can look at the concluding address at the end of the First Part of the 1799 version to see how the poet figures his relationship to Coleridge. The poet explains that the motivation to tell his story, beginning in childhood, stemmed from a “weakness of a human love for days / Disowned by memory” (l.444-45). Telling his story allows him to claim his past, a project worthy of Coleridge’s sympathy, (and perhaps approval):

Nor will it seem to thee, my Friend, so prompt
In sympathy, that I have lengthened out
With fond and feeble tongue a tedious tale. (l.447-49)

The poet is certain that his “Friend” will sympathize with him: he, of all people, surely does not think the story of the poet’s life is a “tedious tale.” Wordsworth admits a hope that the memories themselves might admonish him, and “spur” him on “To honorable toil” (l.452-53), but then questions the efficacy of his poetic project. Has he reached the point where he is “sufficiently matured” and ready to write *The Recluse*? He worries that by delving into his past he will unearth nothing useful, either for himself or for his Friend, and he fears that his attempts at recollection will accomplish none of the poem’s aims:

Yet, should it be
That this is but an impotent desire,
That I by such inquiry am not taught
To understand myself, nor thou to know
With better knowledge how the heart was framed
Of him thou lovest, need I dread from thee
Harsh judgments if I am so loth to quit
Those recollected hours that have the charm
Of visionary things, and lovely forms
And sweet sensations that throw back our life
And make our infancy a visible scene
On which the sun is shining?— (l.453-64)

Here he expresses a profound anxiety that is quickly shaken off when he confidently asserts that he needn't fear Coleridge's "harsh judgments" if he is "loth to quit" the memories that illuminate the past as "a visible scene." There is a chance that his inquiry into first things will neither teach him about himself nor provide his Friend with the knowledge of how his "heart was framed." The implicit answer to the unstated rhetorical question about whether he should "dread" judgment from Coleridge is "no, of course I don't need to worry about disappointing my sympathetic Friend who would be tolerant even of my most misguided efforts." In a sense, the poet is in dialogue with himself through the figure of Coleridge: he assures himself that it is safe to take the risk of trying to write this intimate poem because he has one reader who will not think less of him if it turns out badly. As we will see, in the many subsequent versions of the "waiting for the horses" episode Wordsworth significantly refigures the function of the poet's sympathetic Friend.

Behold Me Then Once More

Wordsworth read the Second Part of his two-part poem to Coleridge on January 4, 1804, which marked the beginning of a period of substantial revision. By March 1804, the two parts had become five books: portions of

1798-99 Part I were moved to later books, much of Part II became Book II, and new passages were composed to fill out the new structure. He wrote to Coleridge about his progress on March 6: "I finished five or six days ago another Book of my Poem amounting to 650 lines...When this next book is done which I shall begin in two or three days time, I shall consider the work as finish'd."⁷⁶ It would seem that Wordsworth was on the brink of finishing the poem which he told Francis Wrangham (in late January or early February 1804) would "take five parts or books to complete."⁷⁷ Of the manuscripts that survive from the period of time during which Wordsworth considered expanding the poem into five books (MSS. WW, W, and M), only MS. W contains a fragment of the "waiting for the horses" episode. In MS. W Wordsworth worked out a version of the lines that lead up to the "waiting for the horses" episode on pages 48v and 49r, and Mary Wordsworth recopied these lines a few pages later on 50v and 51r (*The Thirteen-Book Prelude* 2:302-3, 306-7). The last line of Mary's fair copy of this passage contains *only the first half-line* of the episode: "One Christmas time." The rest of the episode does not appear in MS. W.⁷⁸ At some point between March 6 and March 12,

⁷⁶ *The Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth (1787-1805)*, Letter 162, pg. 368.

⁷⁷ *ibid.* Letter 157, pg. 355; *The Thirteen-Book Prelude* 1: 12-13.

⁷⁸ The editors of the Cornell Wordsworth series present photographic reproductions and transcriptions of these early 1804 manuscripts that contributed to Wordsworth's idea of a five-book poem, but they do not produce a reading text of what that poem might have been. Duncan Wu, however, reconstructs his version of the five-book poem in *The Five-Book Prelude* (1997). As Brennan O'Donnell notes, much of what Wu reproduces is not new material: "of the 1,113 lines that comprise the reconstructed books IV and V, only about half (570) are edited from MSS. W or WW; the remainder comes from manuscript work toward other and better known versions of the poem. Even before Reed published transcriptions of the whole of MSS. W and WW, much of the work therein toward what Wu calls books IV and V of the five-book stage of the poem was available in De Selincourt's *Prelude* (and Darbishire's revised edition) and in the Norton *Prelude*." Editorial reconstructions, especially with respect to Wordsworth's texts, are not limited to Wu's *The Five-Book Prelude*: Stephen Parrish explains that "lacking a fair copy to base our text on" for the Cornell Wordsworth edition of the *Tuft of Primroses*, the editors used "writing scattered in two notebooks" to produce "what would have

Wordsworth decided to abandon the five-book plan; by March 18, he sent Coleridge a fair copy of Books I-V (MS. M).⁷⁹ The “waiting for the horses”

resulted if, before abandoning his poem, Wordsworth had asked for a fair copy incorporating his latest carefully written entries” (Parrish, “The Whig Interpretation of Literature” 347; cf. *The Tuft of Primroses* 37; see also Gill’s rationale for adding the “Female Vagrant’s Tale” to *Adventures on Salisbury Plain* in *Salisbury Plain Poems* 17).

Wu takes seriously Jerome McGann’s view in *The Textual Condition* that “producing editions is one of the ways we produce literary meanings,” and for Wu, such a production requires that an editor collaborate with what he calls “textual witnesses,” or materials that “can testify at first hand as to the poem’s possible, or probable, contents” (McGann 33; Wu 16). Wu’s Five-Book *Prelude* stands in direct opposition to Robin Jarvis’ claim that “There was never a completed version of the *Prelude* in five Books and we cannot now manufacture one” (550). In place of a model of authorial intention that assumes what Wu calls “the existence of a single, objective entity...embodying intention,” he offers a model of collaborative intention, which includes editors (17). Indeed, he explicitly states that his function as an editor is analogous to Wordsworth’s function as an author: “if the present-day editor of the *Five-Book Prelude* is in doubt concerning the need to resort for a section of text to the *Two-Part Prelude*, he or she need only reflect that this is precisely what the poet himself would have done” (19). Wu’s source for the “waiting for the horses” episode is the earliest version in the manuscript we just looked at—MS. V (1799). (Although Wu tells us this manuscript is his source, there is a discrepancy regarding line 352. In MS. V[9r] the line reads “And I and my two Brothers, orphans then,” while the corresponding line in Wu’s edition (V.367) reads “And I and my two brothers (orphans then)” [*The Prelude, 1798-1799*, 263; Wu 149]). The half-line in MS. W is Wu’s collaborative cue: he notes in his Introduction that the “catch-words provided by the poet in one manuscript—‘One Christmas-time’, for the concluding episode—indicate to his copyist where the spots of time were to be inserted, cannibalized from drafts of different, but related, works,” and later in Appendix II he notes that these “catch-words...are sufficient to indicate that the waiting for the horses episode was to conclude the poem” (19, 207-8). Wu-the-editor becomes Wu-the-twenty-first-century-copyist, joining the ranks of Wordsworth’s amanuenses.

The incomplete version of the “waiting for the horses” episode in MS. W represents an important moment in Wordsworth’s process of revising the poem. We do not know whether he would have revised the episode further had he continued it in MS. W, or whether the half-line was supposed to remind Mary, or Dorothy, or Wordsworth to simply copy the earlier version of the episode into another manuscript. That Wordsworth wrote only the first half-line of the episode in MS. W points to the liminal and incomplete state of the five-book poem itself. Wu’s edition raises an important question with respect to reading among versions: does the “waiting for the horses” episode in this five-book edition count as a version? I would argue that reading Wu’s editorial version of the episode is redundant: it is effectively the same as the 1799 (MS. V) version (there are a few differences with respect to punctuation and capitalization, and “Which” is changed to “That” at the beginning of line 366). Wu’s edition of the 1804 five-book poem partially resembles the 1850 version: Wordsworth conceived of these versions of his poem, but did not actually produce them himself. (The 1850 version was based mostly on MS. E, a manuscript whose revision Wordsworth only occasionally supervised.) Both editorial versions—Wu’s 1804 version and the 1850 version—become, in effect, apparatuses to our reading among manuscript versions of the poem.

⁷⁹ See Wordsworth’s March 12 letter to William Sotheby (*The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years, 1787-1805* Letter 164, pg. 371-72). Reed remarks that Wordsworth’s “phrasing, although certainly about *The Prelude*, does not suggest that he is at the point of finishing the poem; and the plan to conclude the poem in five books had by then probably been abandoned” (*The Thirteen-Book Prelude* 1: 13-14).

episode does not appear in MS. M because in this longer scheme it is part of Book XI.⁸⁰

After writing a version of “waiting for the horses” in MS. V (1799), and an incomplete version in MS. W (1804), Wordsworth returned to the episode again in MS. Z, which dates from February to May 1805. MS. Z contains fair copy, mostly in Mary Wordsworth’s hand, of material that became Books XI and XII in the thirteen-book *Prelude*. Aside from a few changes in capitalization and punctuation, the episode in MS. Z is nearly identical to the version that appears in MS. V (1799). The introductory and concluding lines, however, change significantly. Here, we see Wordsworth grappling with repositioning the episode in relation to other spots of time and placing a call to witness in an address to Coleridge directly after the narrative.

Between the Penrith beacon episode and the “waiting for the horses” episode, Mary copied lines that would serve as a transition on page 15r. She then crossed them out and entered a revised version of the transition at the end of the “waiting for the horses” episode on page 16r, which effectively reversed the order of these two episodes: “waiting for the horses” came before the Penrith beacon episode. According to Reed, another revised transition was then “reentered on 14r,” a page inserted into the manuscript before 15r, and “modified to restore the original order” (*The Thirteen-Book Prelude* 2:450).⁸¹ In other words, the second revision of the transition reestablished the original order of the episodes.

⁸⁰ Reed notes that Wordsworth wanted Coleridge to have a copy of “all recent short poems not already printed in *Lyrical Ballads*—together with ‘the Poem on his Life and the Pedlar’” before Coleridge sailed to Malta on April 2 to recover from ill-health (*The Thirteen-Book Prelude* 1: 1253; see also pp. 17-19).

⁸¹ Wordsworth considered reordering the Penrith beacon episode and the “waiting for the horses” episode in MS. W, but did not actually reorder them until MS. Z (see MS. W, 48r, 48v, 49r, 50v-51r, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude* 1: 417-19, 422-23; 2: 302-304, 306-307, 431).

If we take a closer look at the revised transition that precedes the “waiting for the horses” episode on page 14r, we find that it refers specifically to restoration:

I would give,
may
While yet we may, as far as words can do,
A substance & a life to what I feel:
I would I would enshrine the spirit of
the past
For future restoration. Yet another
Of these to me affecting incidents
With which we will conclude.
(MS. Z [14r] XI.339-45, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude* 2: 450)

These lines in MS. Z retain the sense present in MS. V (1799) that the “waiting for the horses” episode is one of several memories the poet recalls: “Another scene which left a kindred power / Implanted in my mind” (329-30, First Part). This new introduction in MS. Z further distinguishes the spot of time as a poignant memory poetically preserved for “future restoration.” The reference to restoration in MS. Z thus looks back to the spots of time passage in which the poet explains that these episodes “invisibly [repair]” the imagination, and anticipates the poet’s physical and mental repair in the episode. The diction of these lines also indicates that there is a sacredness in giving “a substance and a life” to feelings and memories in writing, “enshrin[ing]” the “spirit of the past” in language. The act of writing keeps alive and safe the memories that sustain the poet. The poem, then, makes these restorative memories available to the poet (should he forget them) and Coleridge (the reader), to whom they are entrusted.

Pages like 14r, on which Wordsworth wrote the lines that reinstated the original order of the Penrith beacon episode and the “waiting for the horses”

episode, were often inserted into the manuscript to provide blank space on which revisions could be worked out. But the lines that revise the end of the “waiting for the horses” do not appear on an inserted page; instead, part of a new page was sewn onto page 16r to cover the bottom half where Mary had crossed out the lines that would have reordered the episodes. Wordsworth wrote the following address to Coleridge on that slip of paper sewn over the rejected transition:

Thou wilt not languish here: O Friend
for whom
 I travel in these dim uncertain [sic] ways
 Thou wilt assist me as a Pilgrim gone
 In quest of highest truth. Behold me then
 Once more in Natures presence thus
restor'd
 Or otherwise behold me at her shrine
 Heal'd and accomplish'd sensible of what
 Had been escap'd & strengthend once
again
 To habits of devoutest sympathy
 (MS.Z [16r] XI.390-97, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude* 2: 452)

Whereas in the two-part poem an address to Coleridge appears sixty-eight lines after the “waiting for the horses” episode, in MS. Z an address appears directly after the episode. In the former, Coleridge is sympathetic reader whose presence is a kind of safety net in case of poetic failure; in the latter Coleridge is called to witness the poet’s restoration. The poet insists that his Friend will “not languish here”: the word “here” could refer to this particular point in the poem (i.e., you will not brood on the memory or linger on these preceding lines), or it could refer to the “here” of the speaker (i.e., England).⁸²

⁸² In 1805 Coleridge was still in Malta trying to recover from ill-health, and this line might support the necessity of his distance: in other words, “my friend, you will not continue to suffer here in England.”

Coleridge is also addressed as “O Friend,” an apostrophe that both distances the poet from the addressee, and elevates the rhetoric from the intimate and more colloquial “my Friend” in the first version, to the more detached and oratorical. The poet repeats the idea that he is writing this poem, traveling through the shadows of memory, for Coleridge, who will assist him on his pilgrimage in the pursuit of “highest truth.” Coleridge set Wordsworth off on a poetic journey to write *The Recluse*, and here the poet announces that Coleridge continues to support him in this related, but different project. He also invokes Coleridge as a witness: he declares, “Behold me then / Once more in Natures presence thus restor’d,” in the way just described in the “waiting for the horses” episode, or “otherwise” (in another way). And then again, “behold me at her shrine / Heal’d and accomplish’d.” The poet is particularly vague about how he was restored—all that seems to matter is that he was restored in the presence of Nature and he wants Coleridge to witness it. We might read the poet’s injunction as an attempt to reaffirm his restoration in the “waiting for the horses” episode that immediately precedes these lines. Is the description of his restoration at the end of the episode too obscure—“unknown to me / The workings of my spirit thence are brought” (388-89)? Does the poet’s experience of restoration need further explication? Does the invocation of Coleridge as a visual witness indicate that we should focus on the fact that the poet was restored, and not so much on how he was restored? Does the poet need validation? Coleridge-as-witness here still functions as he did in the 1798-1799 address: he is the figure through which the poet sanctions his own project. The reference to a “shrine” at which he wants his Friend to behold him recalls the poet’s desire to “enshrine” his memories of the past in the lines that introduce the episode. Whereas before the act of enshrining could be read as

the act of writing these memories in poetic language, here the poet wants Coleridge to see him worshipping not language but Nature. Does this reference to Nature's shrine recall the natural landscape of storm and forest that reminds him of waiting for the horses just days before his father died?

Unfortunately, Wordsworth's revision of this address in the next version of the episode in MS. A does not provide much illumination (he does not add more information about the poet's restoration until 1832). Two fair copies of the thirteen-book poem were made from late 1805 to early 1806: MS. A, by the poet's sister Dorothy, between November and February; and MS. B, by the poet's wife Mary, between December and February. Both reflect the revisions Wordsworth made to "waiting for the horses" in MS. Z—most notably, the invocation to Coleridge as a visual witness who beholds the poet's restoration. The lines that introduce the episode in MS. A remain largely unchanged, as does the episode itself.⁸³ The concluding address to Coleridge in MS. A omits the repetition of "behold me" as well as the reference to Nature's "shrine":

Behold me then
Once more in Nature's presence, thus restored
Or otherwise, and strengthen'd once again
(With memory left of what had been escaped)
To habits of devoutest sympathy.
(XI.393-87, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude* 1: 304)

This revised conclusion emphasizes the poet's restoration and renewed strength: something has been "escaped," and his "habits" of sympathetic devotion have been reinforced. If we recall that Wordsworth calls the "Poem to Coleridge" his "deepest devotion" in 1798-1799 (509, Second Part), and that it

⁸³ Line 340 in MS. Z reads, "While yet we may, as far as words can do"; line 340 in MS. A reads, "While yet we may, as far as words can give" (*The Thirteen-Book Prelude* 1:303). Wordsworth revised the diction of the episode most significantly in C-stage revision (1818-1820), which we will discuss shortly.

was Coleridge's sympathy he desired and deserved in the address that concludes the First Part of the two-part poem, then we might say that when he is strengthened to "habits of devoutest sympathy," he reaffirms his poetic affinity with Nature and with Coleridge.

To understand the significance of the poet's memory of "what had been escaped," we need to consider the events described in Books X and XI. Book X describes the poet's residence in France and the French Revolution: Wordsworth left the Loire region and Annette Vallon (who was pregnant with their child) for Paris in late October 1792; revolution was rising,⁸⁴ and in late November or early December, Wordsworth returned to England. At the end of Book X, the poet refers to a period of crisis in 1796 when his faith in the French Revolution was shattered: he lost "All feeling of conviction" and "Yielded up moral questions in despair" (X.898-900); Napoleon had come to power in 1795; the oppressed had "become Oppressors in their turn," and the French "had changed a war of self-defense / For one of conquest, losing sight of all / Which they had struggled for" (X.791, 792-94). In Book XI, titled "Imagination, how impaired and restored," the poet claims that imaginative impairment cannot last because the "life of nature, by the God of love / Inspired," however "impair'd," is eternally present: "having been once born [it] can never die" (XI.99-100, 106-7).⁸⁵ We get a general sense of the poet's impairment in Book XI, including a description of a time when his senses were unbalanced. His eye was all-controlling, "master of the heart": the "most

⁸⁴ Important current events include the imprisonment of Louis XVI (Aug. 10, 1792), the September Massacres (Sept. 2-7, 1792), the Battle of Valmy (Sept. 20, 1792), and Louis XVI's trial (beginning Dec. 11, 1792).

⁸⁵ Repair and impair come from different root words; the word "impair" comes from *empaire* (Fr.), meaning to make worse or less valuable.

despotic” of his senses “gain’d / Such strength” and “held [his] mind / In absolute dominion” (XI.172, 174-76). This description of a state in which one sense becomes a despot, in which the rule of visual perceptions impairs one’s imagination, is strikingly Blakean. But Wordsworth does not personify such a state as Blake does in his poetry; in fact, Wordsworth does not go into detail about how balance was restored. The “means / Which Nature studiously employs to thwart / This tyranny,” he says, is “matter for another song” (XI.176-77, 185)—in other words, *The Recluse*, which he had still not written in 1805.⁸⁶ The connection forged (by invisible links) in childhood was strong enough to overthrow the eye’s dictatorship and reveal that the “degradation” he felt, “aggravated by the times,” was indeed fleeting (XI.243, 248). He says,

I had felt
Too forcibly, too early in my life
Visitings of imaginative power,
For this to last: I shook the habit off
Entirely and for ever, and again
In Nature’s presence stood, as I stand now,
A sensitive and a creative Soul. (XI.251-57)

The power of his connection to Nature, felt through his childhood memories, was the source of his recovery from crisis, and he stood restored in “Nature’s presence.” About ninety lines later, in the conclusion to Book XI, the poet again refers to his restoration “in Nature’s presence” in the address to Coleridge that follows the “waiting for the horses” episode. There he refers back to the troubled times of 1796 when he says that he still remembers “what had been escaped,” but confidently calls Coleridge to witness the restoration of his once impaired imagination. The “waiting for the horses” episode is the

⁸⁶ The line, “Let this be matter for another song” was deleted by Mary Wordsworth in MS. E (1839); see *The Fourteen-Book Prelude* 236.

penultimate 'spot of time' in this version, preceding the "ascent of Mt. Snowdon" episode at the beginning of Book XIII. The subject of Book XI is amplified in Book XII, and the speaker's account of restored imagination in "waiting for the horses" prepares the way for the spot of time which describes his gestalt vision of "the Imagination of the whole" (XIII.65).

As he did in January 1804, Wordsworth read his poem to Coleridge during the Christmas holidays in 1806-1807. Coleridge responded to hearing the thirteen-book poem in its entirety in a poem he wrote in January 1807 (first published in 1817) entitled, "To William Wordsworth."⁸⁷ In a poetic act of reciprocation, Coleridge addressed his poem, which responds to Wordsworth's poetic address to him, to Wordsworth. It begins with excitement:

Oh friend! Oh teacher! God's great gift to me!
Into my heart have I received that lay
More than historic, that prophetic lay
Wherein (high theme by thee first sung aright)
Of the foundations and the building-up
Of thy own spirit, thou hast loved to tell
What may be told, to th' understanding mind
Revealable. (1-8)

In Coleridge's response we find confirmation that Wordsworth's poem has effectively communicated the story of his poetic origins: Coleridge "received" the song Wordsworth sang—the "more than historic" lay, the prophetic song of himself. Coleridge's celebration of Wordsworth's accomplishment is the validation the poet sought in both the 1798-1799 and 1805-1806 apostrophes

⁸⁷ The title continues, "Lines composed, for the greater part, on the night on which he finished the recitation of his poem in Thirteen Books, concerning the growth and history of his own mind, January 1807, Coleorton, near Ashby-de-la-Zouch." All references to "To William Wordsworth" are from *Romanticism: An Anthology* (Blackwell, 1998).

we've looked at.⁸⁸ After recalling a condensed version of the narrative of Wordsworth's poem in the first verse paragraph, Coleridge describes a vision:

I viewed thee in the choir
Of ever-enduring men. The truly great
Have all one age, and from one visible space
Shed influence. (42-5)

Coleridge beholds the poet, not in "Nature's presence," but in a celestial context, among eternal singers. In his response to Wordsworth's song about his childhood experiences, poetic origins, and imaginatively sustaining memories, why does Coleridge describe him in a choir of the greatest poets, instead of in Nature?

Wordsworth mentions a choir only once in his poem at the beginning of Book VII where a "Quire of redbreasts" sings to him about the approaching winter (VII.24; Wordsworth uses the word "choir" in MS. D, 1832). A few lines before the poet talks about these birds, he looks back on 1798-1799, when he first began writing the poem, and 1804, when the "assurances" from his "Beloved friend" (who was in a "foreign Land") failed to keep him going and his work went slowly (VII.13-14, 16). The "choir of redbreasts" inspired the poet to write again, and he joined his voice with theirs: he "half whisper'd we will be, / Ye heartsome Choristers, ye and I will be Brethren, and in the hearing of bleak winds / Will chaunt together" (VII.34-37). After listening to Wordsworth read aloud over the course of several nights, did Coleridge remember this part of the poem where the poet says Nature inspired him to continue writing when his Friend did not? If he were listening closely, wouldn't he have made Wordsworth part of a chorus of birds in "To William Wordsworth"? Coleridge's

⁸⁸ Coleridge's praise is magnified by his adoption of the blank verse form of Wordsworth's poem.

poem less a response requests the poet makes in his poem and more a general response to William Wordsworth as a poet who has written a poetic masterpiece that will be dear to “every human heart,” and is “more than dearest” to Coleridge (54, 55). He recognizes that Wordsworth’s friendship, love, and faith comforted his “benumbed” soul (67), and implicitly wants to assure him that troubled times have passed (though, in fact, they had not—Coleridge’s opium addition had not been cured). The evenings spent with Wordsworth during the holidays reaffirmed their communion, and brought Coleridge back to a “sweet sense of home” where he listened “like a devout child” moved to prayer by a prophet’s supernal psalm (98, 101).

Philosopher and Friend! A Willing Ear

Almost eleven years passed before Wordsworth revised his poem again in 1818-1820. This period of revision, recorded mostly in MS. A, is referred to by the Cornell Wordsworth series editors as C-stage revision.⁸⁹ In the 1818-1820 version of the “waiting for the horses” episode there are two pivotal changes: the poet addresses Coleridge *before* the episode, and the concluding address to Coleridge does not appear. There is no way to know whether, or the extent to which, Wordsworth’s alienation from Coleridge from 1810 onward affected his revisions of *The Prelude*.⁹⁰ One might be tempted to

⁸⁹ Reed notes that revised MS. A usually contains “the most authoritative record of the poet’s latest C-stage revisions”; MS. C, a fair copy, written by Wordsworth’s clerk, John Carter, stops at XII.188, and “contains only about three books that were copied as recension of the latest state of C-stage revision, and even those...were not closely reviewed by Wordsworth near the time of copy” (*The Thirteen-Book Prelude* 2: 5). MS. C is important for a later stage of revision when it was used as the base copy text for MS. D.

⁹⁰ Wordsworth’s relationship with Coleridge suffered greatly after their falling out in 1810. Wu summarizes: “while having an argument with Coleridge in London, [Basil] Montagu falsely claimed that Wordsworth had asked him to say that Coleridge had been a complete nuisance to his family because he was a ‘rotten drunkard’...the remark stung, and Wordsworth’s high-minded refusal to write to Coleridge, even when Montagu himself had reported events to him,

argue that Wordsworth deleted the address to Coleridge in the 1818-1820 version of the “waiting for the horses” episode because his relationship to Coleridge changed; that later revisions “can in a sense be seen as Wordsworth’s response to Coleridge’s disappointment with *The Excursion*, and, by some implication, with the *The Prelude* poetry, too,” as Richard Gravil remarks (Palfreys 31);⁹¹ or even that changes in the 1839 version are a response to Coleridge’s death in 1834. My argument, however, focuses on the textual, not biographical, aspects of Wordsworth’s revisions. It is not that biography has no bearing on poetry, or this autobiographical poem—it certainly does. Biography can illuminate our understanding of Wordsworth’s poem about his life, just as the poem can inform our understanding of his biography. We know *that* Wordsworth repeatedly revised *The Prelude*, but not *why* he repeatedly revised it. We can make observations about what changes among versions, and we can discuss how different versions relate to one another, but we engage in guesswork when we speculate about why particular revisions were made. Our task of reading among versions of the “waiting for the horses” episode does not involve asking questions about why Wordsworth changed the episode (or even whether his revisions made the poem better or

did not improve matters. Wordsworth visited London in 1812 to effect a reconciliation with his old friend, but despite the intercession of several mutual acquaintances, frequent meetings in London, and a tour of the continent together in 1822, their old comradeship was forever lost” (*Romanticism* 448-49).

⁹¹ See the following: 1) Coleridge’s May 30, 1815 letter to Wordsworth in which he expresses his disappointment with *The Excursion* (1814), the poem that was to be the second part of *The Recluse*, and quotes part of “To William Wordsworth” (lines 10-40), perhaps to rekindle poetic spirit who wrote it (*Romanticism* 520); 2) Coleridge’s critical commentary on Wordsworth’s poetry in *Biographia Literaria* (1817), esp. Chs. XIV and XXII (according to Crabb Robinson, “Even Wordsworth, the reader [Coleridge] most ardently respected, refused to do more than skim the book and found ‘the praise extravagant and the censure inconsiderate’” (*Diary*, December 1817, qtd. in *Biographia Literaria* xviii); and 3) Coleridge’s July 21, 1832 dictation in which he laments that Wordsworth still has not written *The Recluse* and criticizes *The Excursion* again: “Wordsworth should have first published his Thirteen Books on the growth of an individual mind, far superior to any part of *The Excursion*” (*Romanticism* 548).

worse); instead, we are focusing on versions of an episode in order to understand the way in which textual revision is an essential part of the episode's meaning. Ultimately, the only evidence for the claim that Wordsworth's omission of a concluding address to Coleridge in the "waiting for the horses" episode in 1818-1820 was motivated by his falling out with Coleridge (or any other reason) is the version itself.

Despite the estrangement between Wordsworth and Coleridge, the poet again calls upon his Friend to witness his imaginative restoration in the 1818-1820 version of the "waiting for the horses" episode, but this time he does so in the lines that introduce the episode. We should recall that the introductory lines in the 1805-1806 version of the episode focus on the restorative power of the speaker's memory: "I would enshrine the spirit of the past / For future restoration. Yet another / Of these to me affecting incidents / With which we will conclude" (XI.342-45). In 1818-1820, Wordsworth revises the second sentence:

Then vouchsafe,
Philosopher and Friend! a willing Ear
While I record a second incident
With thankful memory.
(XI.324-27, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude* 2:211)

Here, Coleridge is specifically called to listen to his story, a request that recalls both his description of it as "A Story destined for thy ear" (X.946) and his reading of the poem to Coleridge more than ten years earlier. The phrase "Philosopher and Friend" is the only reference to Coleridge in this version: the concluding address does not appear; the episode ends with the poet's musings about the "workings" of his spirit. Coleridge is not invoked as a visual

witness who beholds the poet's restoration; rather, he is an aural witness to the story of his memory, Wordsworth's "willing" wedding-guest.

The 1818-1820 version of the episode is the first version in which we see significant changes in diction that further highlight Wordsworth's reframing of the episode in these introductory lines as a story to be heard, a tale with which Coleridge would "vouchsafe," or privilege, an ear. It is in 1818-1820 that Wordsworth changes "two horses" to "rough palfreys" in "I went forth / Into the fields, impatient for the sight / Of those rough Palfreys that should bear us home; / My brothers and myself" (XI.329-32). Implicitly pointing out that the choice of "Palfreys" does not adhere to the poetic principles Wordsworth outlined in his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802), that poetry should use a common language, "language really used by men," Fruman asks, "had anyone in England during Wordsworth's lifetime ever called a horse a palfrey?" (*Lyrical Ballads and Related Writings* 392; Palfreys 10). The word "palfrey" was indeed most commonly used in the twelfth century to refer to type (not a breed) of horse particularly suited to riding (as opposed to a trotting horse which would typically be harnessed and used in fieldwork); its smooth gait would be ideal for a light rider such as the young Wordsworth. The change from "horses" to "palfreys" is less colloquial and more literary: it recalls the Monk's palfrey in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (207, Prologue); Una sitting on her "palfrey slow," riding alongside the Red Crosse Knight in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (Canto I.38); and the palfrey that breaks free of his reins in Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis" (384-85), an occurrence that gives Venus a focal point for her discourse on unbridled passion.⁹² "Venus and Adonis" was much admired

⁹² In Chaucer, see also the runaway palfrey in *The Reeve's Tale* in *Canterbury Tales*; and the palfrey upon which Dido sits in Chaucer's *The House of Fame: The Legend of Good Women* III.1198. In Spenser, see *The Faerie Queene* Books I, III, V, VI and VII. For other literary appearances of palfreys in the nineteenth century, see the *Oxford English Dictionary*: Scott's

by Coleridge, who discussed its “specific symptoms of poetic power” in *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter XV (1817); Shakespeare’s poem is perhaps a source for the white palfrey to which Geraldine says she was tied in Coleridge’s *Christabel* (published 1816). It is impossible to say whether Wordsworth’s revision of “Palfreys” is a specific nod to Coleridge, but it undoubtedly elevates the diction of the passage and evokes stories of pilgrimage, knights and damsels. It indicates that the adult’s memory of the boy’s experience is more like an epic tale; the poet imagines the young boy anxiously waiting for horses from stories about journeys and romance to take him home. The fact that they are “rough Palfreys” in 1818-1820 adds an edge to these horses that are typically associated with those who prefer a safe and gentle ride. In a sense, the adolescent boy is still small enough that he can’t handle a bigger horse, but by saying that he would ride a “rough Palfrey,” we see him imagine himself as more of a burgeoning hero. While we might read a tone of the mock-heroic in the boy’s bold assertion that he is waiting for a knight’s chargers to arrive, this recasting of the horses might speak to his experience of guilt. In this version of the memory, perhaps the boy felt guilty about being so impatient to go home, which is also linked to his guilt over his father’s death, because he was caught up in an adolescent fantasy. God “corrected” his desire to live in a fictional world by exposing him to the pain and suffering of real life through his father’s death.

In addition to reminding us of Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare, Wordsworth importantly cites one of his own poems in the 1818-1820 revision. The verb “was” in “Upon my right hand was a single sheep” (which appears in

1813 *Bridal of Triermain*, “A Maiden, on a palfrey white” (II.xiv.74) and Tennyson’s 1859 *Geraint & Enid* “[He] shook his drowsy squire awake and cried, ‘My charger and her palfrey’” (126).

all the versions thus far) becomes “couch’d” (359). This revision might remind us of Milton’s epics, but he only rarely uses the word “couch’d” in the context of animals: for example, “beast and bird, / They to their grassy couch, these to their nests / Were slunk” (Paradise Lost IV.600-601); “fowls in their clay nests were couched” (Paradise Regained I.501).⁹³ What seems even more relevant to our reading of “couch’d” is Wordsworth’s poem, “Song for the Spinning Wheel” (1812). In this short poem about a “Belief Prevalent Among the Pastoral Vales of Westmoreland,” the speaker talks about the “faery power” that attends one who spins wool at night, when “beneath the starry sky, / Couch the widely-scattered sheep.”⁹⁴ If we think of the sheep that couched by the boy’s side in the 1818-1820 version of the “waiting for the horses” episode in the context of this magical scene in “Song for the Spinning Wheel,” then Wordsworth’s citation of himself lends it a mythic quality, the stuff of country legend. The effect of this change in diction turns the boy’s memory into more of a fantastical story, a tale everyone might, at least, have heard of. Thus the revisions made to the 1818-1820 version of the episode widen its literary scope of reference, underscore it as a story for Coleridge to listen to, and effectively place Wordsworth in the great choir of poets that his Friend envisioned.

Prophets of Nature

Wordsworth turned to his poem yet again during December 1831 and January 1832 in MS. D, a fair copy in Mary Wordsworth’s hand (transcribed

⁹³ Milton also uses the word couch to refer to something concealed, as in the reference to Satan, “the Artificer of fraud” who “was the first / That practiced falsehood: under saintly show / Deep malice to conceal couched with revenge” (IV.121-23).

⁹⁴ *Shorter Poems, 1807-1820* 108-109.

from MS. C). Manuscript evidence shows that Wordsworth decided to split Book X into two books and renumber Books XI and XII accordingly as early as 1805, but the fair copies do not reflect this revision until MS. D.⁹⁵ Thus, Book XI, which contains the “waiting for the horses” episode in the thirteen-book poem, became Book XII in the fourteen-book poem. Owen’s reading text of the final version of *The Prelude* is based on three versions: his primary source is “the final revision of MS. D,” but he also includes “authorial substantive revisions” from MS. E—a manuscript which dates from late March to May 1839, “carelessly and mechanically written” by Wordsworth’s daughter, Dora, and her cousin Elizabeth Cookson, “without the poet’s supervision”—and the 1850 published version, which was “set from MS. E, with variants derived sometimes from earlier manuscripts, sometimes, apparently, from the conjecture or invention of its editors” (*The Fourteen-Book Prelude* 19, 5). We will consider Wordsworth’s revisions of the last two versions of the “waiting for the horses” episode in MS. D (1832) and MS. E (1839), but we will not consider the 1850 version because, with respect to the “waiting for the horses” episode, it reflects editorial revisions neither Wordsworth nor Mary made.

In the 1818-1820 version of the “waiting for the horses” episode, Wordsworth addressed Coleridge as a “Philosopher and Friend” who might lend an ear to the story that followed. This initial reference to Coleridge does not appear in MS. D or MS. E; rather, the poet expresses his desire to

⁹⁵ Mark Reed notes, “Probably...it was April or May [1805], after an initial stage of copy had been completed, that Wordsworth wrote at the tops of the first pages of the two books in MS. Z ‘Book 12th’ and ‘Book 13th,’ respectively, revealing that he was then planning a fourteen-book poem—and if so, he was almost certainly presenting what became AB Book X as two books, divided as in MS.D and thereafter, following line 566. And enough time must have passed after original copy of ‘Book 12th’ (AB Book XI) to allow some cool review and deliberation before the poet wrote above the title, ‘This whole book wants retouching[.] the subject is not sufficiently brought out.’ The precedence of the title suggests that the self-criticism came late in the preparation of the manuscript” (*The Thirteen-Book Prelude* 2: 433-4).

Before we look at Wordsworth's revision of the end of the episode, I would like to briefly point to two changes in diction Wordsworth made in 1839 that highlight the memory as less a literary narrative and more a record of the poet's altered perception of his recollected self. The progression involves the nature of the boy's repair, or return to the summit: Wordsworth changes the line "Thither I repaired / Up to the highest summit" (340-41, First Part, MS. V 1799), to "Thither I repaired, / And gained the highest summit" (XI.337-38; C-stage revision, 1818-1820 and MS. D 1832), and then to "thither I repaired / Scout-like, and gained the summit" (XII.296-97, MS. E 1839).⁹⁶ In the last

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version of the memory, the boy is an emissary sent out ahead of the others to survey the situation and watch for the palfreys. Whereas in earlier versions the sheep and the hawthorn offer the solitary boy companionship, here they stand at his side more as sentinels, natural agents in the field. The C-stage revision of “gained” adds an aspect of achievement to the boy’s physical repair to the mountain, which is further emphasized in MS. E by the adjective “Scout-like.” He also changes “rough Palfreys” to “led palfreys,” which downplays the boy’s previous fantasy that they would arrive out of an epic tale of romance. Both of these revisions indicate the poet’s altered conception of himself: they mark a shift away from literary allusion and narrative fantasy, toward a more mature and resolute vision of self.

The 1818-1820 version of “waiting for the horses” episode does not contain a concluding address to Coleridge (or anyone else). The episode stands on its own at the end of Book XI. In 1832 and again in 1839 Wordsworth reworked the ending that had remained unrevised in all the versions up until 1832. In these later versions we see the poet attempt to explain the effect of his restoration more fully. The 1818-1820 version of the episode ends with these lines:

All these were spectacles and sounds to which
I often would repair, and thence would drink
As at a fountain: and I do not doubt
That in this later time, when storm and rain

And scout like watched watch & [?]
Scout like, & watch (*The Fourteen-Book Prelude* 1208-9)

MS. E, later revision, WW’s hand:

on road to fix
Thither, (for which of these two roads might first
~~Might first~~ { show to my eager sight the expected steeds
Was all uncertain) Scout-like I repaired
(*The Fourteen-Book Prelude* 242)

Beat on my roof at midnight, or by day
When I am in the woods, unknown to me
The workings of my spirit thence are brought.
(XI.365-371, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude* 2: 212, 936-37)

Reading from the transcription of MS. D, the 1832 version of the episode concludes:

All these were kindred spectacles & sounds
To which I oft repaired, & thence would drink
As at a favorite fountain; & belike
Down to this very time, when storm & rain
Beat on my roof at midnight, or by day
When in a grove I walk whose lofty trees
Laden with summers thickest foliage, rock
In a strong wind, some workings of the spirit
Some inward agitations thence proceed
To blend with all that impulse from without
Inspires by effort tempered & restrained
By melancholy awe or pleasing fear.
(XII.323-33, *The Fourteen-Book Prelude* 1077)

The 1839 version was revised by both Wordsworth and Mary. The final lines of the episode in MS. E read:

my
some of the workings of the spirit
Some inward agitations thence proceed.
Whateer their office, whether to beguile
Thoughts over busy in the course they took,
Or animate [?to] an hour of vacant ease.
(XII.331-35, *The Fourteen-Book Prelude* 243)

Wordsworth's revisions embellish the scene and extend the passage. No season is specified in the 1818-1820 version—just being in the woods makes him feel as though his response is shaped by the formative incident of waiting for horses as a schoolboy. In 1832 (MS. D), where summer is specified, it is summer at its height, not a general summer day in the woods, but a windy one

that makes the trees rock. This embellishment of the poet's experience "in the woods" contributes to the attempt to explain in more detail the conditions under which he remembers that day he waited for the horses. There is still the sense that hearing "storm and rain" at night or being in the woods on a windy, summer day could evoke the memory. Certainly the windy conditions recall the windiness of the day of waiting, but in 1832 the poet isn't just "in the woods," he is in motion, walking in a grove whose trees are also in motion with the wind—two features that do not appear in 1818-1820. The change from "in this later time" to "Down to this very time" more emphatically returns the narrative to the present; and although the landscape of "the woods" shrinks to that of the smaller "grove," there is a more detailed description of walking among the trees in summer in 1832. The added specificity and vividness of the later description brings the scene of memory more fully back to life.

Perhaps the most important change among these last three versions of the episode concerns the poet's certainty: in 1818-1820 he "does not doubt" that the "workings of his spirit" come to him from this spot of time when he finds himself in a similar landscape. In 1832 he is less sure—such an experience is most likely ("belike") to happen in "this very time."⁹⁷ In MS. D Wordsworth changes "The workings of my spirit" to the less definitive and more vague "some workings of the spirit," but then glosses the phrase for us as "Some inward agitations."⁹⁸ Again, the poet attempts to describe things more specifically: spiritual "workings" are inwardly felt disturbances.

⁹⁷ Owen's reading text substitutes "and on winter nights" for "& belike" (326), but this suggestion of yet another season which might evoke the memory is based on its appearance in a late revision of MS. E and the 1850 version; neither revision is attributed to Wordsworth or Mary.

⁹⁸ Owen's reading text has "some working of the spirit" (1850 version) instead of "some workings of my/the spirit."

Wordsworth remains unsure about whether these are the “workings” of his own spirit or part of a more general, or universal spirit; according to my reading of the manuscripts, no choice was made between “my spirit” and “the spirit” in 1839. In 1832, the poet doesn’t say that this spiritual motion comes to him unconsciously, or in an unknown way; instead, he focuses on what they do—he says, “some workings of the spirit / Some inward agitations thence proceed” (1832), or come from those kindred spectacles and sounds, and these workings have effects. Inspired by a “melancholy awe or pleasing fear” (contrary emotions that uplift as well as dishearten), the poet’s inward motion blends, or merges, with the outer motion of storm, or wind.

The poet’s uncertainty reappears in the 1839 version in the last three lines in MS. E. The poet is not sure what effect the workings have on him—rather, he emphasizes that he does not know what those feelings do, what the “office,” the appointed function, is of his agitation. He offers two possibilities: they either “beguile,” or distract thoughts “over busy” in their present course; or they “animate,” or enliven, an “hour of vacant ease.” The uncertainty of the “whether this or that” construction, about the effects of the workings (or inward motion) that come from memory, signals a more distanced stance from which the poet observes his own restoration. Uncertainty about how the workings come to him (they are “unknown” to him in 1818-1820) becomes uncertainty about their effects in 1839. The poet’s more specific engagement with the ways in which his own restoration through memory affects him, shows him offering his own reading, or commentary, rather than that of someone watching or listening to him.

Wordsworth’s removal of references to Coleridge does not diminish his powerful presence in the poem. He is part of the poet’s story, allied to his

affections, bonded by invisible links of memory, a kindred soul, and a fellow prophet. At the end of the 1798-1799 two-part poem, the poet bids farewell to his Friend, wishes him health (both physical and mental), and hopes that his long life will be “a blessing to mankind” (514, Second Part). At the end of the thirteen-book “Poem to Coleridge,” the poet addresses his Friend again, but does not say goodbye. The Friend to which the poem is addressed has become part of the poet’s life, part of the poem, and an integral part of the future he imagines. Together, they will reveal the divinity of “the mind of man” and speak their sacred revelation with once voice to all of humanity:

Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
A lasting inspiration, sanctified
By reason and by truth: what we have loved
Others will love; and we may teach them how,
Instruct them how the mind of man becomes
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
On which he dwells, above this Frame of things
(Which ‘mid all revolutions in the hopes
And fears of Men doth still remain unchanged)
In beauty exalted, as it is itself
Of substance and of fabric more divine.

(The Thirteen-Book Prelude XIII.442-52)

In summary, Coleridge’s presence in the earlier versions of the “waiting for the horses” episode makes his absence in the later versions more pointed and significant. When we look at all the versions of the “waiting for the horses” episode, we see Wordsworth reframing the episode by addressing Coleridge as different kinds of witnesses to the poet’s restoration: in 1798-1799, he is a sympathetic reader who will not reproach the poet if he fails in his task to learn about himself and teach his Friend about his poetic origins; in 1805-6, he is called to be a visual witness who beholds the poet’s restoration in Nature’s presence; in 1818-1820, he is called to be an aural witness who listens to the

story of the poet's memory. In 1832 and 1839, Coleridge is not invoked as a witness, but in his absence the poet becomes a witness to his own imaginative restoration. In all these versions, the poet's restoration through memory is something to be beheld, a story to be heard, and an experience whose effects the poet attempts to more fully respond to, record, and explain. Wordsworth's later revisions to the conclusion of the episode are far from trivial, and only through a reading of revision in all the versions of the episode do we understand how textual absence impacts the growth of the poet's presence.

Revision in Wordsworth's versions of the "waiting for the horses" episode and Blake's versions of a narrative (discussed in the previous chapter) is an integral part of their meaning. Though Blake and Wordsworth revised their poems differently, their workings illuminate a continual process of struggle, self-reflection, and revelation by which consciousness grows and comes to know itself. Blake's contraction of the narrative of limited perception points to an expansive vision of the divine that we are called to recognize in ourselves, and Wordsworth's (eventual) deletion of an address to Coleridge emphasizes a transformation in the way he sees and remembers himself. The next chapter considers Tennyson's additions to *In Memoriam*, and the connection between textual incorporation and recovery in the wake of loss.

CHAPTER FOUR

Incorporation and Completion in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*

I sing to him that rests below,
And, since the grasses round me wave,
I take the grasses of the grave,
And make them pipes whereon to blow. (*In Memoriam* 21.1-4)⁹⁹

Tennyson sang the song of experience that is *In Memoriam* many times. After the death in 1833 of his beloved friend, Arthur Hallam, he began writing lyrics about the painful, but necessary, process of living on. These lyrics eventually became *In Memoriam*, a long poem that hovers somewhere between grief and acceptance, doubt and faith; it is a meditation on what it means to be human—that is, to come into being through an intense connection to others and suffer their loss, to grapple with a way to understand both companionship and aloneness. It is also a poem about the ongoing experience of internal change and the process of self-reflection, of continually revising one's attitudes, thoughts, and feelings. Revision is present at almost every level of *In Memoriam* in sections, stanzas, and lines that chart the mourner's changing attitude toward grief over time. While Tennyson could not have known how long and complex its textual history would be, the beginning of section 21 (which he wrote between 1834 and 1838) suggests that this will be a poem of multiples and multiplicities: the many versions the elegist sings are not only the stanzas and sections of the poem, but also the drafts, revisions, editions, and reprintings.

⁹⁹ All citations from *In Memoriam* are from *Tennyson: In Memoriam*, ed. Susan Shatto and Marion Shaw (1982), unless otherwise noted.

Tennyson produced multiple versions of *In Memoriam* both privately and publicly—unlike Blake, whose practice of poetic revision remained private during his lifetime (due in large part to the lack of a significant readership), and unlike Wordsworth, whose revisions of *The Prelude* remained private in spite of the fact that he was a nationally recognized poet. Between 1833 and 1850, Tennyson wrote poems in various notebooks and was notoriously reluctant to show them to anyone, even his publisher, Edward Moxon. In December 1848 or January 1849, Moxon had to disabuse Tennyson of his notion that what he had been writing for “his own relief & private satisfaction” were “things that the public would have no interest in, and would not care to see”; Moxon read the (Lincoln) manuscript, and immediately offered to publish it.¹⁰⁰ The first edition of *In Memoriam* was published in June 1850. Though Tennyson became Poet Laureate in November 1850 (succeeding Wordsworth, who died in April 1850), celebrity did not speed him toward a final version of *In Memoriam*. Thirty-one further editions of the poem were published between 1850 and 1884.¹⁰¹ What distinguishes *In Memoriam*’s textual history from that of Blake’s poems and Wordsworth’s *The Prelude* is both its public revision over many years and its completion by the author. Neither Blake nor Wordsworth designated a “final” version of the poems we’ve discussed: death was the only thing that stopped Blake from producing further versions of his poems; and while death made the publication of *The Prelude* possible, the version published in 1850 reflects choices largely made by editors. Tennyson, however, brought the process of revising *In Memoriam* to a close when he produced the last edition in 1884.

¹⁰⁰ An account by Charles Tennyson Turner, as reported by A.J. Symington in a letter to Hallam Tennyson, 11 January 1894 (qtd. in Shatto & Shaw [S&S hereafter] 18).

¹⁰¹ A selection of sections from *In Memoriam* was published by Francis Palgrave for Macmillan’s Golden Treasury Series in 1885. For a list of the forty-two sections from *In Memoriam* included in this selection see Marion Shaw, “Palgrave’s *In Memoriam*” 199.

This chapter focuses almost exclusively on Tennyson's practice of revising *In Memoriam* in "printed texts"¹⁰² from 1850 to 1884. He substantially revised individual sections of the poem in manuscripts from 1833 to 1850, but few of these survive. Thus, we only have access to a narrow view of Tennyson-as-reviser from this period.¹⁰³ According to Shatto, the twenty-one manuscripts that survive are "only a small portion of the original number," and from these we cannot "follow the stages of composition of most of the sections" ("Tennyson's Revisions of *In Memoriam*" 342-43). As Shatto and Shaw point out, most of these thirty-three printed texts published from 1850 to 1884 were reissues that contained only minor revisions. However, Tennyson significantly revised four editions in June 1850, January 1851, 1855, and 1870.¹⁰⁴ In three of these four editions—1850, 1851, and 1870—Tennyson added sections to the poem.

Because my reading of Tennyson's practice of adding sections will draw primarily on these three printed editions of the poem, we should take a moment to consider why there are so few *In Memoriam* manuscripts and how their scarcity complicates readings of revision. One of the reasons for the poor rate of survival of *In Memoriam* manuscripts might be Tennyson's well-known (retrospective) dislike for early versions. Many *In Memoriam* manuscripts were probably destroyed by Tennyson's friends at his request, or by Tennyson himself. For example, the March 1850 Trial issue of *In Memoriam* brought

¹⁰² The term "printed texts," adopted from Shatto and Shaw, refers to editions of the poem dating from March 1850 to 1884.

¹⁰³ Tennyson revised most of the individual sections of *In Memoriam* before March 1850; he substantially revised only one section between March and June 1850: 124.1-8 and 124.17-20 appear for the first time in the first edition (S&S 24).

¹⁰⁴ S&S 324-26. They also note that after 1870 the only significant changes are changes in diction in eleven places (326).

together the lyric sections Tennyson had been writing in various notebooks since 1833. The Trial issue is an important version of *In Memoriam*, not only because it was the base from which he revised the poem for its first publication in June 1850, but also because it was a public text that Tennyson revised as a poet and an editor. Tennyson privately printed about twenty-five copies of the Trial issue and sent them to friends for comment and criticism. (He often printed private copies of his poems before publication because, he said, “poetry looks better, more convincing, in print” [(*Memoir* 2: 383; I: 190)].¹⁰⁵ One of the three surviving copies of the Trial issue was annotated by Tennyson’s friend, Aubrey de Vere. Tennyson’s instructions to de Vere were clear: “when the book is published, this avant-courier of it shall be either sent back to me, or die the death by fire...I shall print about twenty-five copies, and let them out among friends under the same condition of either return or cremation” (*Memoir* I: 282).¹⁰⁶ Of the twenty-five changes De Vere suggested, Tennyson incorporated only a few (seven verbal revisions and four capitalization and punctuation revisions), most of them in 1855, and the others in 1863, 1870, and 1875 (S&S 324).

Tennyson’s son, Hallam, wrote that his father “‘gave the people his best,’ and he usually wished that his best should remain without variorum readings, ‘the chips of the workshop,’ as he called them. The love of bibliomaniacs for first editions filled him with horror, for the first editions are obviously in many cases the worst editions” (*Memoir* I: 118).¹⁰⁷ Tennyson

¹⁰⁵ The “proofs,” or private copies, of the Trial issue do not survive (see S&S 20).

¹⁰⁶ The letter is not dated, but could be from either ‘soon after 13 November 1849,’ or February 1850 (S&S 20). The Trial issue had no title-page; the eleven introductory stanzas and the dedication to Hallam appear for the first time.

¹⁰⁷ Tennyson was also loath to respond to the public’s request that he write notes to his poems: “What hope that my prose should be clearer than my verse? Shall I write what

wanted his public to see product, not process. That he considered early versions of his poems to be inferior is supported by his wish that the manuscripts of *In Memoriam* never be quoted or copied. Trinity College, Cambridge obtained *In Memoriam* MSS. in 1897 and 1924 subject to this very condition. The removal of the interdict in 1969 allowed scholars to explore Tennyson's poetic workshop and produce a variorum edition, which he would most likely have disapproved.

What we do know from the *In Memoriam* manuscripts, Shatto argues, is that between 1833 and 1850 Tennyson substantially revised seven sections: 31, 32, 59, 123, 124, 128, and 130. Shatto's analysis of Tennyson's revision of these sections in manuscript emphasizes her sense that they improved the poem: "Where [Tennyson] expanded sections, he added an intellectual toughness and depth. Where he abbreviated them, he both intensified our focus on the ideas and obscured his own description of them in order to suggest rather than delineate" (356).¹⁰⁸ Shatto shows us how Tennyson got from point a (early drafts of a particular section) to point b (the section as it appeared in the 1850 edition), but a crucial part of the poem's textual history is missing if we limit our reading of revision to the manuscripts. Tennyson's process of writing and revising the poem did not end in 1850; it spanned over fifty years, from 1833 to 1884. I want to argue that in order to read revision in *In Memoriam*, we must extend our understanding of Tennyson's practice of

dictionaries tell to save some of the idle folk trouble? or am I to try to fix a moral to each poem? or to add an analysis to certain passages? or to give a history of my similes? I do not like the task" (S&S 157; from a draft of Tennyson's 'Prefatory Notes', written in the hand of Hallam Tennyson and eventually printed in the *Eversley* Edition I: 333-34).

¹⁰⁸ Shatto argues that the "most remarkable trend" of Tennyson's manuscript revisions is the "deliberate attempt to obscure and make less personal the references to himself and to Arthur Hallam" in twelve sections (Shatto 344-45).

revision to include both manuscripts and printed texts. For example, what is the relationship between manuscript versions of section 59 and the version of the section that appears in the poem a year after it was first published? And how does Tennyson's addition of this section to the poem affect our reading of it? Only when we take into account the textual history of the poem in manuscript and in printed texts can we see the ways in which Tennyson's practice of revision is an essential part of the poem's meaning.

The sections that Tennyson added to published versions of *In Memoriam* foreground the importance of revision. The 1850, 1851 and 1870 versions of the poem include new sections that are intimately bound to another section as a partner. Tennyson increased the number of sections in the poem from 119 (in the Trial edition), to 129 (in the first edition): adding numbers 7, 8, 56, 69, 96, 97, 119, 120, 121, and 128.¹⁰⁹ Two of these sections especially stand out as a pair: 7 and 119 concern the same subject and contain similar (if not identical) lines and end-rhymes. In 1851, he added section 59; and in 1870, he added section 39. Remarkably, 59 and 39 are each respectively partners to sections already in the 1850 poem: 3 and 2. Tennyson's practice of adding sections is an essential part of understanding the poet's process of mourning: these paired sections are linked by a common figure through which the poet expresses how his process of mourning changes over time. With respect to 7/119, 3/59, and 2/39, the later section in each pair recalls and recasts both the poet's previous perspective on grief and an end-rhyme from its earlier partner section. In other words, the later section in the

¹⁰⁹ The first edition of *In Memoriam* was published anonymously on June 1, 1850 and, although Tennyson's authorship of the poem was noted in *Publisher's Circular* (XII 190) on the very same day, "his name never appeared on the title-page of any single-volume edition of the poem in his lifetime" (S&S 22). The title *In Memoriam* (which appeared as the dedication to the Trial edition) was suggested by Emily Sellwood, whom Tennyson married in June 1850.

pair repeats and revises its earlier partner section both semantically and formally. As I hope to show in this chapter, the incorporation of these complementary sections marks the completion of Tennyson's process of mourning and revision.

Vision and Revision

Tennyson learned of Hallam's death in a letter from Hallam's uncle, Henry Elton, dated and postmarked 1 October 1833. He responded to the news by writing poetic variations on the same theme. On October 6, he wrote the first poem, which would eventually become section 9 of *In Memoriam*, "Fair ship, that from the Italian shore," about the return of Hallam's body by sea. By early 1834 he had written two more poems about the same subject that would become section 17, "Thou comest, much wept for," and section 18, "'Tis well; 'tis something" in 1850. Also in October 1833 Tennyson wrote two poems that describe alternate perspectives on mortality: "Tithon," about a man who has been granted eternal life, but not eternal youth, and curses his immortality; and "Ulysses," about a hero from the Trojan War who, on the brink of death, wants to leave home again to further explore the world.¹¹⁰ Even though neither "Ulysses" nor "Tithon" became part of *In Memoriam*, they give insight into one of its governing principles: in such groups of related poems Tennyson shows how the mourner's perspective on grief changes over time. As Timothy Peltason remarks, these monologues, viewed as a diptych, "offer the paired challenges of being in time, of consciousness discovering that it must die and discovering that it must live" (65). Tennyson himself remarked

¹¹⁰ In classical mythology, Tithonus was given eternal life by the goddess Aurora (or Eos) whom he loved. Ulysses' circuitous journey home is the subject of Homer's *Odyssey* (Tennyson's poem combines Homer's account of Ulysses with that in Dante's *Inferno*).

that “Ulysses” was about “the need of going forward and braving the struggle of life perhaps more simply than anything in *In Memoriam*” (*Works* 2: 339).

In order to understand the temporal frame in which the added sections and their earlier partners participate, we can look at the speaker’s movement from intense despair toward acceptance in pairs, or groups of sections distributed throughout the poem. Sections recording annual recurrences help Tennyson measure what has changed as more time intervenes between Hallam’s death and the mourner’s present. We can then consider the speaker’s movement from vision to revision in an individual section as a way to think about Tennyson’s revisions of the form of added sections. The poem begins after Hallam’s death in the Fall, and then continues through Christmas Eve to Spring, and repeats this cycle twice. We should remember that more sections occur in the first year of mourning than in the following two years: year one comprises seventy-one sections (1-71), year two comprises twenty-seven sections (72-98); and year three comprises thirty-three sections (99-131). Each year, he looks back on where he was the year before, revises his perspective on the past, and moves forward. The Christmas Eve sections (28-30, 78, 104-106), the Spring sections (38, 86, 88, 115-116), and the sections that describe the anniversaries of Hallam’s death (72, 99) bring the poem’s chronology into fuller view.

Two groups of related Christmas Eve sections, 30/78/105 and 28/104, will provide us with brief glimpses of the poem’s temporal scope. The first stanzas of 30, 78, and 105 give us a sense of the speaker’s emotional trajectory:

With trembling fingers did we weave
The holly round the Christmas hearth

A rainy cloud posses'd the earth,
And sadly fell our Christmas-eve (30.1-4)

Again at Christmas did we weave
The holly round the Christmas hearth
The silent snow possessed the earth,
And calmly fell our Christmas-eve (78.1-4)

Tonight ungathered let us leave
This laurel, let this holly stand.
We live within the stranger's land,
And strangely falls our Christmas-eve. (105.1-4)

One of the first things to notice here is the shift in tense from past, “did we weave” and “fell” (30.1, 4; 78.1, 4), to present, “let us leave” and “falls” (105.1, 4). This difference between the first two Christmas Eves and the third one is further emphasized by the associative relationship between external landscape and internal mood in the first two years: the phrase “stranger’s land” echoes in the adverb “strangely,” calling our attention to the uncanny experience of a familiar time in an unfamiliar place.¹¹¹

Sections 28 and 104 describe the first and third Christmas Eve; they too have similar first stanzas:

The time draws near the birth of Christ:
The moon is hid; the night is still.
The Christmas bells from hill to hill
Answer each other in the mist. (28.1-4)

The time draws near the birth of Christ;
The moon is hid, the night is still;
A single church below the hill
Is pealing, folded in the mist. (104.1-4)

¹¹¹ The third Christmas Eve is associated with the first Christmas that the Tennysons spent in a new home in High Beech, Epping Forest (1837).

The first two lines and the end-rhymes are identical, but the number of bells and their tone change. On the first Christmas Eve, the antiphonal bells are the voices of “four hamlets” that come fitfully to the ears of the reluctant celebrant, who hears the ringing “Swell out and fail, as if a door / Were shut between me and the sound.” The sound of the bells does not carry through the intermittent silence, which creates a barrier between the speaker and holiday joy. In anticipation of section 105, the “single peal of bells” (resonating from a “single church”) during the third Christmas Eve in 104 sounds like “strangers’ voices” in “lands where not a memory strays, / Nor landmark breathes of other days” (104.5, 9, 10-11). Both 30/78/105 and 28/104, then, show the speaker revising his previous perspective in order to move forward from an intense sadness that keeps him from celebrating on the first Christmas Eve, to an engagement with holiday activity in the midst of a “quiet sense of something lost” (78.8) on the second Christmas Eve, and finally to a different, and more distanced, relationship to sorrow on the third Christmas Eve.

The sections that describe the three Springs chronicle this same pattern of change through a gradually widening perspective on loss. During the first Spring in section 38 (“With weary steps I loiter on”), the speaker continues to experience the grief he felt on the first Christmas Eve. He has neither direction nor destination: “The purple from the distance dies, / My prospect and horizon gone” (38.1, 3-4). “The herald melodies of spring” give the speaker “no joy,” and the songs the speaker “love[s] to sing” contain only a “doubtful gleam of solace” (38.6, 5, 7, 8). Where we might expect a doubtful note of solace in these songs, the glimmer of light (“doubtful gleam”) instead signals a return to the narrow visual realm of the dying light of the sky in the first stanza of 38. In the second Spring in sections 86 (“Sweet after showers”) and 88 (“Wild bird,

whose warble, liquid sweet”) he wishes that Nature would inspire him: he asks the “ambrosial air” (86.1) to “fan” his “brows and blow / The fever” from his cheek and “sigh” into him new life (86.8-9). If we think of these lyrics as songs, “these songs I sing of thee” (38.11), then the inspiration that Nature breathes into the poet writing 86 is like an annunciation, a message designating the one breathed on as the bearer of new life.¹¹² This new breath of life allows the speaker to imagine a broader scope of images, as Sinfield observes, “in the water images, from ‘showers’ to ‘the horned flood’ to ‘belt on belt of crimson seas’, and in the light-dark images, which brighten from ‘gloom’ through ‘shadowing’ to ‘crimson’ and finally the ‘orient star’” (62). The third Spring is very much like the third Christmas Eve in that the speaker finds himself moving in a new direction. His emotional distance from grief is represented in his wider perspective of an expansive landscape. He perceives the last vestiges of snow, the first blooming of flowers, flocks in a vale, sails on a “distant sea,” and a seamew diving in “yonder greenening gleam” (115.12, 14).¹¹³ “The distance takes a lovelier hue” (115.6), both in terms of the landscape and

¹¹² Shatto and Shaw note that Tennyson’s revisions of particular lines of 86 in the Lincoln Manuscript and the Trial edition “indicate T.’s desire to increase the steady, sweeping movement of the verse,” and that his comments about this single-sentence section imply that it “should be read in one breath” (243). New life would also be breathed out by the reader. We would be remiss, however, if we did not consider Eric Griffiths’ observation that a reader speaking this poem aloud may run out of breath: “Even the best lungs will be weary at the close of the section, will have the air left only to whisper the word which is the destination of this eloquent trajectory. ‘Peace’. Said in that way, breathing the reader’s last, the word can sound like the peace that death is, the peace of ‘Rest in peace’” (44). In other words, vocalizing the poem requires that a speaker express the culminating calm under the pressure of her dying breath.

¹¹³ Tennyson’s grandson, Sir Charles Tennyson, notes that Tennyson’s engagement to Emily Sellwood was recognized by her family in early 1838, and that “the last date in the time sequence of *In Memoriam* is April, 1838... There is no mention of the engagement in these stanzas, but the reference to this springtime and the mood in which the poem closes, are strong evidence that he regarded it as having brought to an end the long period of depression following Arthur’s death, and given him a new hope and purpose in life” (*Alfred Tennyson* 177-8).

the temporal distance between his initial grief and his present state of happiness. In the section that follows, this new understanding of his emotional landscape moves him toward the future in which Hallam's presence is still felt, but there is also "Less yearning for the friendship fled, / Than some strong bond which is to be" (116.15-16).

Finally, the sections that describe the two anniversaries of Hallam's death, 72 and 99, are crucial elements in the speaker's arc because they provide us with a vision of something the others do not: his movement from isolation to community.¹¹⁴ In section 72 the speaker returns to, and revises his perception of, the day of Hallam's death, and in 99 he further revises his perception of the original event:

Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again,
And howlest, issuing out of night,
With blasts that blow the poplar white,
And lash with storm the streaming pane? (72.1-4)

Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again,
So loud with voices of the birds
So thick with lowings of the herds,
Day, when I lost the flower of men. (99.1-4)

While the first stanza of 72 is a question, the first stanza of 99 is a questioning statement: the word "thus" in both implies the anxious thoughts of the mourner, dreading the return of this horrible date and wondering what it will feel like when the calendar brings it around again. In 72.1-4 he cannot see the day apart from its connection to the day of Hallam's death and asks the dawn,

¹¹⁴ Hallam died on September 15, 1833. The anniversary sections have received much less critical attention than the Christmas Eves and the three Springs. A notable exception is Valerie Pitt's argument in *Tennyson Laureate* that "climactic moments of the poem fall" not on the Christmas Eves, but on the anniversaries, according to Knowles' record of a version of Tennyson's arrangement (99).

“do you rise thus, in this way, again in storm?” In section 72 the poet continues to see the original event as a “Day, marked with some hideous crime,” and tells the rising sun of dawn to lift its brows “burthen’d” by heavy gloom, to make its tumultuous way across the sky so the day will be over (72.18, 21). He can only see the first anniversary of Hallam’s death through the lens of the original death-day, a perception so painful he demands that it “hide” its “shame beneath the ground” (72.28). When the second anniversary comes, he recognizes that the day dawns thus, in this way, with loud sounds of living things. He has come to terms with, and is able to perceive, the dawn of the day. The contrast between sections 72 and 99 might also be encapsulated in the shift of the meaning of the word “thick,” from the mourner’s command to the dawn, “climb thy thick noon” (72.26), to his description of a new dawn “thick with lowings of the herds” (99.3). The meaning of the word changes from an intense, visually impenetrable and isolating weather to the collective sounds of a community of animals, highlighting the poet’s revised perspective of this day. Instead of seeing the day as impossibly terrible and demanding that it do its worst and end as he did on the first anniversary in 72, he takes a more passive position and watches the day that dawns the following year in 99 tremble “By meadows breathing of the past,” and wake “myriads” to “Memories of bridal, or of birth, / And unto myriads more, of death” (99.7, 14-16). Although he realizes on the second anniversary that for others it marks occasions like marriage and birth, his recognition that it also marks other deaths allows him to move from the solitude of his grief to a community of all those unknown “kindred souls” who “mourn” with him on this day (99.19, 20).

Now that we have traced the speaker’s revised perspectives in the Christmas Eve sections, from his inability to see a way to move forward to a

widening of this perspective in the Spring sections, and from isolation to community in the anniversary sections, we are better equipped to explore the way in which his perspective changes from one section to another, one line to another, and in an individual section of the poem. The general pattern in which the speaker moves forward by recalling the past appears in lines where he reflects on something he has just said. For example, in section 16 the speaker pauses and asks himself, "What words are these have fall'n from me?" (16.1), before he continues the narrative in which he imagines the return of Hallam's body by ship in 17. He looks back on the "calm despair and wild unrest" (16.2) he experienced in the preceding sections and questions whether such contradictory emotional responses can be "tenants of a single breast" (16.3). Similarly, he questions his own recollection of spending time with Hallam when they were young, a memory which takes the form of a pastoral scene where "all we met was fair and good, / And all was good that Time could bring" (23.17-18). In the following section he asks, "And was the day of my delight, / As pure and perfect as I say?" (24.1). Sometimes, these instances are not as proximate: for instance, at the beginning of section 79 he recalls the last line from section 9, self-consciously quotes it, and recasts it in a new context:

My Arthur, whom I shall not see
Till all my widow'd race be run;
Dear as the mother to the son,
More than my brothers are to me. (9.19-20)

'More than my brothers are to me,' –
Let this not vex thee noble heart! (79.1-2)

In section 9 ("Fair ship") the grieving speaker comes to the conclusion that his own death is the only thing that will bring him back together with Hallam, who is more dear to him than his own brothers. When he looks back on this

moment in section 79, he sees things differently and rejects his previous point of view: he knows now that they are “one in kind” (79.5); furthermore, his address to Hallam, in which he says that the recollection of how he felt in the past should not “vex [his] noble heart,” reinforces their connection.

The poet also revises his perspective in section 95, which is part of the second year of mourning. In the first three stanzas the speaker describes a summer evening in which he “linger’d on the lawn” with others: a “silvery haze” was drawn across the sky, the wind was calm, and there was no sound save that of the far-off brook and the “fluttering [tea] urn” (95.1, 4, 8). He continues,

While now we sang old songs that peal’d
From knoll to knoll, where, couch’d at ease,
The white kine glimmer’d, and the trees
Laid their dark arms about the field. (13-16)

The “old songs” that pealed from “knoll to knoll” recall the voices of bells that ring “from hill to hill” on the first Christmas Eve (28.3): both amplify the speaker’s awareness of his surroundings. In 95.13-16 the landscape has a frozen, magical quality: the shining white cows contrast with the anthropomorphic “dark arms” of the trees which rested on the field in repose, or perhaps in an embrace. Then the scene shifts: his friends left and he found himself alone outside, desperately desirous of companionship:

A hunger seized my heart; I read
Of that glad year which once had been,
In those fall’n leaves which kept their green,
The noble letters of the dead. (95.21-24)

No longer able to look into the past by participating in the communal activity of singing, the solitary speaker recalled the past by reaching out to his dead friend, by reading Hallam’s “noble letters.” The general summer leafiness in

part set the stage for his turning to those legible leaves (pages) of the letters. He heard “silent-speaking words,” the dead man’s voice “speaking” from the pages, and then experienced a moment of transcendence:

So word by word, and line by line,
The dead man touch’d me from the past,
And all at once it seem’d at last
The living soul was flash’d on mine,

And mine in this was wound, and whirl’d
About empyreal heights of thought,
And came on that which is, and caught
The deep pulsations of the world,

Aeonian music measuring out
The steps of Time — the shocks of Chance —
The blows of Death. At length my trance
Was cancell’d, stricken thro’ with doubt. (95.33-44)

Here, memory triggered a spiritual reunion, a moment when the “living soul” “flash’d” on his own soul. Swept up in “empyrean heights of thought,” he “caught / The deep pulsations of the world” in music that “measure[ed] out” Time, Chance, and Death. These details are reminiscent of Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey”: while the poet does not have an experience with one particular “living soul” (as Tennyson does in section 95), he does describe a moment when “the motion of our human blood” is “Almost suspended, we are laid asleep / In body, and become a living soul”—“we see into the life of things” (45-47, 50). In Wordsworth, accident, chance, or shock typically interrupts a scene and initiates an imaginative reaffirmation of connection with Nature (in the “spots of time” in *The Prelude*, for example), but in section 95 of *In Memoriam* “shocks of Chance” are part of Tennyson’s trance. “At length,” uncertainty interrupted the ecstatic experience: it cancelled, or obliterated his trance by a striking through of doubt. The poet struggles with doubt in *In*

Memoriam in both productive and obstructive ways. At times, the poet doubts his faith in God and the immortality of the soul; he worries that there might be no larger meaning in death, and that his poetic efforts to celebrate Hallam's life and come to terms with his death will amount to nothing. If hope of immortality is snuffed out by materialistic Nature, then Hallam's memory will not live on in him (because he too will die) or his poetry—"I shall pass; my work will fail" (57.8). In fact, at one point in the poem's textual history, Tennyson stopped writing after section 57: the lyric sequence in the Trinity Manuscript (1842) ended with "Adieu, adieu' for evermore" (57.16). Other times, the poet's doubt is more productive, or creative, as it is in section 95. Doubt interrupts his transcendental experience and causes him to pause and reflect on how difficult it is for him to say what really happened. He admits that language, intellect, and memory fail to illuminate the experience:

Vague words! but ah, how hard to frame
In matter-moulded forms of speech,
Or ev'n for intellect to reach
Thro' memory that which I became. (95.45-48)

Section 95 pivots on this stanza: this pause, this moment of doubt-induced self-reflection, both suspends the speaker on the brink of articulation and prepares the way for him to see differently. In the stanza that follows, his perspective on what he saw around him before changes. Lines 49-52 recall lines 13-16 and repeat them with slight, but crucial, differences, signaling a new vision, a revision:

Till now the doubtful dusk reveal'd
The knolls once more where, couch'd at ease,
The white kine glimmer'd, and the trees
Laid their dark arms about the field. (95.49-52)

In their close but imperfect resemblance, Stanza four (lines 13-16) and stanza thirteen (lines 49-52) of section 95 function much like the sections from the Christmas Eve, Spring, and Anniversary clusters we have looked at. That is, the members of the pair, or triad, repeat each other so closely that the slight inexactness of the repetition is highlighted. Moreover, the relationship between members of the pair is temporal: the alterations between stanzas, or sections, indicate the degree to which the speaker's attitudes change over time. Unlike twins, however, these pairs of sections are like successive versions or drafts of a poem or part of a poem that a poet returns to again and again. In effect, 95.49-52 recalls 95.13-16 and revises ideas in the earlier lines with different wording, or emphasis.

As Richard J. Dunn points out, the shift from "While now" (95.13) to "Till now" (95.49) indicates that the poet "looks more directly to the scene without imposing song or memory upon it" (141). The only end-rhyme that differs between this stanza and 95.13-16 is "reveal'd" (95.49)—it is "peal'd" in 95.13. The "doubtful dusk" extends the productive function of doubt in this section in that it revealed this more directly perceived scene and looks forward to the promised dawn of the "boundless day" (95.64), whose "glory," Tennyson claimed, "dispelled" the doubt that ended the trance (*The Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson* 3: 252). But before the poet's doubt disappears, it initiates his perception of a new vision in which sight and sound merge: something moved—a breeze, "suck'd from out the distant gloom," trembled over the leaves of a "sycamore" and shifted the "still perfume" in the air (95.53, 55, 56). The breeze grew into a strong wind that "rock'd" trees, "swung" and "flung" flowers, and eventually became speech: it said,

‘The dawn, the dawn,’ and died away;
And East and West, without a breath,
Mixt their dim lights, like life and death,
To broaden into boundless day. (95.61-64)

In the “final infinitive ‘to broaden’,” Dunn argues, the voice of the breeze ushered in an “eternal promise, a hope, and a power, but not a definitive answer to just what the day may bring” (144).

We can use this movement in section 95—from a remembered vision, to a reflective pause initiated by doubt, to a revision that imagines a future by recalling the past and recasting it in a new context—as a template for understanding the structure of *In Memoriam*’s envelope stanza.¹¹⁵ In the *abba* rhyme scheme, the fourth line of each stanza revises the first line after an intervening pause by the *bb* couplet in the second and third lines. The fourth line circles back to the first line, “returning to its setting out,” as Christopher Ricks argues; but, as Sarah Gates claims, the ends “do not quite meet: the first ‘a’ raises the anticipation of the second, but the intervening couplet interrupts that closure, or deflects the rhyme, so that the second ‘a’ recollects, but differs from the first.”¹¹⁶ In other words, the second ‘a’ is a revision of the first ‘a’, an echo that repeats the first ‘a’ with a difference. If the first ‘a’ and the second ‘a’ represent vision and revision, respectively, then the *bb* couplet represents a pause, a moment of reflection, an interruption of doubt that might

¹¹⁵ Tennyson characterized the “metre of *In Memoriam*” as “a quatrain of the sonnet shortened” (*Letters* II: 555); see also *Memoir* I: 305-6 for Tennyson’s belief that he was the “originator of the metre, until after ‘*In Memoriam*’ came out,” when he was told that Ben Jonson and Sir Philip Sidney used it.

¹¹⁶ Ricks, *Tennyson* 228; Gates 509. Both Ricks and Gates argue for slightly different spatial analogies for *In Memoriam*’s envelope stanza: drawing on section 12, Ricks suggests that the stanza form is a circle; Gates suggests that it is a spiral. James Kilroy argues that both the envelope stanza and the poem have chiasmic structure (“The Chiasmic Structure of *In Memoriam*, A.H.H.,” *Philological Quarterly* 56 (1977): 358-73).

bring the stanza to a halt. In 1850 Charles Kingsley claimed that the *a-rhyme* of the *In Memoriam* stanza “always leads the ear to expect something beyond,” and Gates points out that this is because the second ‘a’ is “different from the middle couplets and only faintly recollects its partner.”¹¹⁷ The second ‘a’, then, the revision, leads to another vision, another (different) first ‘a’ that begins the next stanza. Each successive stanza continues this movement from vision (a), to a pause (bb), to a revision (a).

Thus far, we have looked at four ways in which the speaker of *In Memoriam* moves forward by looking back on his past and revising his perspective: in groups of related sections, whose members are distributed throughout the poem, that map his process of mourning over the course of three years (the Christmas Eve, Spring, and Anniversary sections); in sections and individual lines that recall and comment on previously articulated perspectives; in section 95; and in the structure of the envelope stanza. The sections Tennyson added to *In Memoriam* as a pair, or a partner to a section already in the poem, participate in the poem’s temporal scheme in that we can see how the mourner’s perspective changes over time from one member of each pair to its partner section. More specifically, the members of a pair resemble the pair of stanzas in section 95 in that the later section in each pair revises its earlier partner. The movement from vision to revision, from one section to its partner, is underscored by a formal revision of the *abba* stanza. As we move on to consider these paired sections in more detail, we will look at the ways in which the textual history of their incorporation is an essential part of their meaning.

¹¹⁷ Kingsley qtd. in Ricks, *Tennyson* 228; Gates 508.

Growing Incorporate

Let us recall that in October 1833 Tennyson started writing poems on the theme of imagining a future in response to the news of Hallam's death: *In Memoriam* sections 9, 17, and 18, as well as "Ulysses" and "Tithon."

Tennyson used the same word to describe "Ulysses" and "Tithonus" (a revised version of "Tithon") and the sections he added to *In Memoriam* between 1850 and 1870: he called them "pendants."¹¹⁸ As pendants these poems are attached to, or hang from, their partners as companion-pieces.¹¹⁹ These Tennysonian pendants, then, share the following characteristics: they concern a common subject, provide different points of view on this subject, and are written in the same form—"Ulysses" and "Tithon" are dramatic monologues written in blank verse, the pendant pairs in *In Memoriam* are lyrics written in envelope stanzas.¹²⁰ Additionally, the *In Memoriam* pendants articulate different perspectives on grief through a common figure: 7 and 119 focus on the doors to Hallam's house; 3 and 59 address Sorrow; and 2 and 39 address the yew tree. But *In Memoriam* pendants differ from "Ulysses" and "Tithonus" in an important way: whereas "Ulysses" and "Tithonus" describe alternate perspectives, the *In Memoriam* pendant pairs evoke changes in perspective over time. In the later section of each *In Memoriam* pair, the poet imagines a future by recollecting the past in order to gain a new perspective on the present. They contribute to the mourner's experience of what it means to live

¹¹⁸ For Tennyson's comments on 7 and 119 see Ray, *Tennyson Reads Maud* 3; for his comments on 3 and 59 see *Works* 3:242; and for his comments on 2 and 39 see *Memoir* 2: 53 and S&S 202-203. "Tithon" was revised in late 1859, retitled "Tithonus," and published in *Cornhill Magazine* in February 1860.

¹¹⁹ The term "pendants" can also refer to paired paintings.

¹²⁰ 7 and 119 contain three quatrains, as do 3 and 59; 2 and 39 contain four and three quatrains, respectively.

through loss that we have seen in those Christmas, Spring, and Anniversary sections which map the annual recurrences of the poem's temporal narrative. This process of revision also occurs at the level of the stanza in each pendant pair: the earlier section sets forth an attitude which its later partner formally revises. The later section of each pair recalls one of the *b-rhymes* from its earlier partner, and recasts it as an *a-rhyme*. Using the movement from vision to revision in section 95 as a template for the movement of the envelope stanza, we might understand the pattern of this formal revision in the following way: that which was figured as a pause, or an interruption, becomes a new vision in its later partner, a point of departure that continues the movement of the envelope stanza. The *bb* couplet moves toward revision in two ways: first, in the earlier section of each pair it moves toward the stanza's closing 'a' rhyme (i.e., 7.bb → 7.a²); second, it also moves toward its partner's 'a' rhyme (i.e., 7.bb → 119.a¹a²). Sections 7/119, 3/59, and 2/39 all follow this pattern of formal revision; sections 2/39 also depart from it. Section 39, Tennyson's last addition to *In Memoriam* in 1870, is not only a companion to section 2, it is also the section that completes Tennyson's process of revising the poem's structure.

Sections 7 and 119 were probably written between 1848 and 1850, possibly even between March and May 1850. No manuscript of 119 survives, and only one manuscript of 7 survives (Harvard Loose Paper 104), which Shatto and Shaw indicate "gives no clue to the date of composition" (168). They also suggest the likelihood that 7 and 119 "were composed together in order to present at the beginning and the end of the sequence the contrasting moods of the poet," which further emphasizes their close relationship (169). Section 7 recalls the first year of mourning, and section 119 is part of the third

year. Thus, these added paired sections span the greatest emotional and temporal distance. Both sections concern the “Dark house” and especially its doors, at which the speaker used to wait for Hallam, and belong to a genre of classical poetry that involves “the song and actions of a lover who is excluded” called *paraclausithyron*: typically, “the lover stands outside the house of his mistress and laments that the door is bolted against him” (S&S 169).¹²¹ 7 and 119 distill the overall shift in the speaker’s attitude toward grief: he moves from the disbelief and sorrow of separation in 7 to the realization that Hallam is with him spiritually in 119.

Dark house, by which once more I stand
Here in the long unlovely street,
Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasp’d no more —
Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
And like a guilty thing I creep
At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here; but far away
The noise of life begins again,
And ghastly through the drizzling rain
On the bald street breaks the blank day. (7.1-12)

Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, not as one that weeps
I come once more; the city sleeps;
I smell the meadow in the street;

¹²¹ S&S also note examples of the genre by Catullus, Tibullus, Horace, and Propertius. In “*In Memoriam* 7 and Song of Solomon,” James Krasner argues that *paraclausithyron* does not adequately describe 7 because the genre “does not include the urban setting or the attention to hands apparent in both Song of Solomon and *In Memoriam*...[instead] Tennyson reverses the subject and object of Song of Solomon 5, so that in his poem the beloved, standing outside the door, and the lover, searching the streets, become the same mourning figure. The dialogue thus becomes a monologue, and the eventual union of the biblical couple contrasts with the impossibility of Hallam and Tennyson reuniting” (94-5).

I hear the chirp of birds; I see
Betwixt the black fronts long-withdrawn
A light-blue lane of early dawn,
And think of early days and thee,

And bless thee, for thy lips are bland,
And bright the friendship of thine eye;
And in my thoughts with scarce a sigh
I take the pressure of thine hand. (119.1-12)

The only end-rhyme that repeats in both sections shifts from the *b-rhyme* in 7 to the *a-rhyme* in 119 and reverses order: “street/beat” in 7.2-3 becomes “beat/street” in 119.1, 4. The formal revision further emphasizes the mourner’s revised perspective: when he stands again in a street he initially described as “unlovely” (7.2), his perception of the city has changed—it now smells of a “meadow” (119.4). In this pair we can also see a shift similar to that of the Spring sections in which the mourner gains a wider perspective on grief, marked by his recognition of a more expansive landscape: where he was focused intently on the doors, noticed a general “noise of life” beginning, and saw the breaking of the “blank day” in section 7, he experiences new sights and smells in the pastoral cityscape of 119. The direct repetition of 7.3 in 119.1, “Doors, where my heart was used to beat,” makes the revision of the *b-rhyme* to the *a-rhyme* even more obvious. Line 7.3 becomes the point of departure in 119: it appears not just as an *a-rhyme*, but also as the first *a-rhyme* of the section.

Although they are not end-rhymes in section 7, the words “hand” and “sleep” also repeat in section 119. In section 7 he remained separate from Hallam, waiting for a “hand” he would never touch again (7.4-5). The gap between the first and second stanzas in section 7, between “a hand” and its repetition, represents the impossible distance between the poet and Hallam.

The hand that represents the connection he desires in 7 mediates that connection in 119. When he returns to the scene in 119, he is able to connect with Hallam imaginatively, to “take the pressure” of his hand (119.12). Additionally, in section 7 he cannot sleep and comes to the doors of Hallam’s house when the city is just waking up, but in section 119 he wakes before the city does.

If the *abba* stanza form represents the movement from vision to revision, then the *bb* couplet in 7 is also a pause that becomes the point of departure for a new vision as the *a-rhyme* in 119. Looking back on section 7, section 119 recalls one of its end-rhymes and recasts it in a new context as another vision that will itself be further revised by the return of the *a-rhyme* in the fourth line of the stanza.

In 1851, a year after the first publication of *In Memoriam*, Tennyson added section 59 to the fourth edition. Section 3 (“O Sorrow, cruel fellowship”) and its new partner section 59 (“O Sorrow, wilt thou live with me”) mark a shift in the speaker’s relationship to grief through a formal revision similar to that which we saw in 7/119. Both sections address Sorrow, a female figure who is a projection of the speaker’s own emotional state, and both are part of the first year of mourning. Section 3 appears at the beginning of that first year and section 59 appears near the end of that year (the second year begins with the first anniversary section 72). Although less time passes between 3 and 59 than 7 and 119, the poet’s emotional change is still quite marked. That the pendant pairs 3/59 and 2/39 are part of year one foregrounds the importance of the mourner’s revised perspective in this initial stage. His relationship to Sorrow changes from section 3 to section 59: he struggles with the temptation of embracing this deceitful woman in 3, yet asks her to join him as his wife in

59. In 3 his vision of the desolate world is Sorrow's vision, one that he tells us is both a lie—"What whispers from thy lying lip?" (3.4)—and an inescapable reality. Deeply disturbed by this vision of Nature as an echo of his own emptiness, "A hollow form with empty hands" (3.12), he asks,

And shall I take a thing so blind,
Embrace her as my natural good;
Or crush her, like a vice of blood,
Upon the threshold of the mind? (3.13-16)

Comparing the last stanza of 3 (above) and the second stanza of 59, we see that the *b-rhyme* in 3 becomes the *a-rhyme* in 59:

O Sorrow, wilt thou rule my blood,
Be sometimes lovely like a bride,
And put thy harsher moods aside,
If thou wilt have me wise and good. (59.5-8)

Again, the order of the repeated end-rhymes reverses: "good/blood" (3.14-15) becomes "blood/good" (59.5, 8). In section 3 he is unsure whether he will accept Sorrow as his "natural good" (3.14), or violently "crush her," as one might destroy, or subdue, a "vice of blood" (13.15), a tainting defect. The formal revision between section 3 and section 59 further highlights the poet's change in attitude: in section 59 he appeals to Sorrow directly and hopes that if she will "rule [his] blood," or life, then she will dismiss her "harsher moods." The shift in these two stanzas is reminiscent of a similar shift in the first stanzas of the anniversary sections 72 and 99: the mourner is blinded by sadness, but his anxious questioning of himself and his perceptions subsides as he gradually incorporates his past experience into his present life in sections 59 and 99. Sorrow remains a threatening presence on the threshold of the speaker's mind at the end of section 3, but he resolves in 59 to take her

in without malice by asking her to be his companion: "O Sorrow, wilt thou live with me / No casual mistress, but a wife, / My bosom-friend and half of life" (1-3). His fear of her abates and he proposes to make her part of his life and codify the bond. If we recall that the speaker figures his relationship to Hallam as that of a widower in "Tears of the widower" (13), then his new relationship to Sorrow as "bosom-friend" substitutes for the one he has lost. In the partner section to section 3, then, he begins to be able to accept companionship. Sorrow is familiar now, and his request that she become his "bride" indicates that he is ready to reincorporate those feelings he had projected outside himself: union with Sorrow is a reunion between himself and his emotions.

The *In Memoriam* manuscripts contain a record of Tennyson's revisions of section 59: the first version of section 59 contains seven stanzas, whereas the version we've just looked at has four stanzas. Shatto explains that Tennyson wrote one stanza between lines 4 and 5 in which "the poet explains to Sorrow why his relationship with her must change: he does not want to flaunt her, as a man would a mistress and as he used to do," and he wrote two stanzas between lines 8 and 9 in which he "describes the 'harsher moods' which he wants Sorrow to put aside [and] gives an indication of what type of new moods she is to adopt" ("Tennyson's Revisions of *In Memoriam*" 349-50). The first stanza that was written between lines 8 and 9 reads:

Use other means than sobbing breath
And other charms than misted eyes
And broodings on the change that lies
Shut in the second-birth of death.¹²²

¹²² Harvard Loose Paper MS, Houghton Library, Harvard University, bMS Eng 952.1 (99), which dates from some time between March 1850 and June 1850 (Shatto 349).

Remarkably, Tennyson used another *b-rhyme* from section 3 as an *a-rhyme* in section 59. The *a-rhyme* “breath/death” above is a revision of a *b-rhyme* from the first stanza of section 3:

O Sorrow, cruel fellowship,
O Priestess in the vaults of Death,
O sweet and bitter in a breath,
What whispers from thy lying lip? (3.1-4)

From this manuscript evidence we can see that even an early version of one member of a pendant pair formally revises its partner section. The poet addresses Sorrow in section 3 in order to hear her say what he already knows, or at least tells us, is a lie; in the draft stanza of section 59 he addresses her in order to instruct her in her new capacity as his wife. Before, Sorrow was “sweet and bitter in a breath” (3.3), pleasurable as well as painful; later, he wants her to put her “sobbing breath” aside. While he suggests that she lose the charm of brooding on something mysterious and impenetrable—“the change that lies / Shut in the second-birth of death”—the description of death as a “second-birth” is certainly a marked change from the cold and dark vaults ruled by Death and the Priestess Sorrow. Again, Sorrow is a projection of the speaker’s emotional state, so his requests that she stop crying and stop dwelling on what might happen after death are directed toward himself.

The added sections we’ve discussed thus far, 7, 119, and 59, were all composed and individually revised by the time Tennyson published the first edition of *In Memoriam* in June 1850. We should recall that sections 7 and 119 were added to the poem in 1850 and section 59 was not added until a year later in 1851 as a partner to section 3. The last section that Tennyson added to the poem has a very different textual history: he wrote section 39 in 1868, eighteen years after the first edition was published, and included it in the

twenty-second edition of the poem in 1870 (*Memoir* II: 53).¹²³ Like sections 3 and 59, sections 2 and 39 are both part of the first year of mourning; sections 2 and 39 are sequentially and formally closer to each other than the other pendant pairs.¹²⁴ The last section Tennyson added to *In Memoriam* was written not only in relation to section 2, but also in relation to the entire poem that had been revised and published multiple times since 1850. Section 39 recalls one *b-rhyme* from section 2 and recasts it as an *a-rhyme*: that which represents a pause returns as a point of departure, a new vision that will be revised when the *a-rhyme* repeats in the fourth line of the stanza. But 2/39 also departs from this established pattern: two *a-rhymes* from section 2 become *a-rhymes* in section 39. Here is the pendant pair:

Old Yew, which graspest at the stones
 That name the under-lying dead,
 Thy fibres net the dreamless head,
 Thy roots are wrapt about the bones.

The seasons bring the flower again,
 And bring the firstling to the flock;
 And in the dusk of thee, the clock
 Beats out the little lives of men.

O not for thee the glow, the bloom,
 Who changest not in any gale,
 Nor branding summer suns avail
 To touch thy thousand years of gloom:

And gazing on thee, sullen tree,
 Sick for thy stubborn hardihood,
 I seem to fail from out my blood
 And grow incorporate into thee. (2.1-16)

¹²³ This edition was published by Strahan (London). According to Sir Charles Tennyson, section 39 was not published until 1870 “because the draft of it had slipped into the back of a writing desk and so had become lost or forgotten” (note by Sir Charles Tennyson in volume 8 of his notebooks in preparation for *Alfred Tennyson*, S&S 202-203).

¹²⁴ There are thirty-six sections between 2 and 39; 111 sections between 7 and 119; and fifty-six sections between 3 and 59.

Old warder of these buried bones,
And answering now my random stroke
With fruitful cloud and living smoke,
Dark yew, that graspest at the stones

And dippest toward the dreamless head,
To thee too comes the golden hour
When flower is feeling after flower;
But Sorrow — fixt upon the dead,

And darkening the dark graves of men, —
What whisper'd from her lying lips?
Thy gloom is kindled at the tips,
And passes into gloom again. (39.1-12)

The first thing to notice is that these sections are bound together by three instances of formal revision. All of the *a-rhymes* in section 39, “bones/stones,” “head/dead,” and “men/again” come from section 2. Moreover, the order of these end-rhymes in section 2 determines their order in section 39: “stones/bones” (2.1, 4) becomes “bones/stones” (39. 1, 4); “dead/head” (2.2-3) becomes “head/dead” (39.5, 8); and “again/men” (2.5, 8) becomes “men/again” (39.9, 12). The structure of the *a-rhymes* in section 39 reflects in reverse the end-rhymes in section 2.

Let us first consider section 39’s revision of the first stanza of section 2. The poet is at the very beginning of the process of mourning in section 2, and the yew tree is, like Sorrow, a projection of his emotional landscape. The scene is bound up in his vision of the tree whose “fibres net the dreamless head” of the dead. The first line of section 2 is repeated with only a slight variation in 39.4: he addresses the tree as “Old Yew” in 2.1 and as “Dark yew” in 39.4. The capitalization of the yew in section 2 links it with other personifications (like Sorrow or Death): powerful forces he struggles to understand and come to terms with. The capitalization is dropped, however, in

section 39 where he sees the tree differently, not as a projection of his unchanging grief, but as the projection of an emotion that, while gloomy, can be altered by perception. In section 39 the tree does not specifically enclose the dead; rather, it is guardian of the “bones” that lie beneath. It still grasps at the (head)“stones,” but only dips *toward* the head of the dead, indicating that in section 39 the mourner is no longer so absorbed with the dead body. The revision of the *b-rhyme* “dead/head” (2.2-3) in section 39 amplifies this shift in perspective: whereas the yew grasps at the headstones of the dead in section 2, Sorrow is “fixt upon the dead” in 39.8. This mention of Sorrow in section 39 recalls what she “whisper’d from her lying lips” (39.10) in section 3; it also looks forward to her reincorporation by the speaker in section 59. Thus, section 39 underscores the poet’s revised perspective on grief both as part of a pair and as a part of the larger structure of the poem’s temporal narrative. Instead of focusing on the tree’s roots touching the dead, in section 39 he perceives the generative touch of the tree’s flowers. The flowers’ “feeling” is also emotional, and we get the sense that he recognizes a similar flowering inside himself. Even though he can now see that the tree changes and blooms out of its state of gloom, “To thee too comes the golden hour / When flower is feeling after flower” (39.6-7), the appearance of Sorrow indicates a slip back into the past when the seasons changed, but the yew tree did not. Both the speaker and the tree remained in mourning in section 2, part of, and connected to, the dead.

Sorrow’s qualification of the speaker’s movement from vision to revision is underscored by the way in which section 39 revises the second stanza of section 2: she shifts the mourner’s attention away from the changing of the seasons to the dead, and further darkens the “dark graves of men” (39.9). The

repetition of “dark” in this line recalls the “Dark yew” in 39.4 and links its veil of shade to Sorrow more directly. In his relapse into grief, the poet sees only the dead: the “graves of men” (39.9) recalls the “little lives of men” (2.8) who, as they run out their course in the “dusk” of the tree, suffer the same fate of death. At the end of section 39 he recognizes that grief can pass: his earlier belief that the seasonal renewal that brought the “flower again” in 2.5 could not touch the yew alters slightly in that he sees that its gloom is “kindled at the tips” (39.11), alight with new life. His revised perception, however, proves to be a fleeting flash of hope: ultimately, he accepts a vision of the natural cycle moving from gloom to brightness to gloom again.

The formal revision between sections 2 and 39 can be understood in terms we have previously discussed: the pause in section 2 (*bb* couplet) returns as a point of departure for a new vision that will continue to be revised (*a-rhyme*) in section 39. But the shift from one *b-rhyme* to one *a-rhyme* is overshadowed by two things: the two *a-rhymes* from section 2 that become *a-rhymes* in section 39, and the fact that every *a-rhyme* in section 39 recalls end-rhymes from section 2. This emphasis on the *a-rhyme* distinguishes 2/39 from the other pendant pairs. The *a-rhymes* that repeat in 2/39 are mirror images: this kind of formal revision does not move toward revision, but toward reflection. The overriding movement of revision here is not *bb*→*a*, but *a*→*a*; it is a self-enclosed system, a closed loop that accentuates the mourner’s return to a perspective he held earlier: he doesn’t move from one perspective on grief to a new one. There is some recognition that change is possible, but he reverts, with Sorrow, back to gloom, back to his vision of the yew tree at the end of section 2.

The last stanza of section 2, whose end-rhymes are not formally revised in section 39, describes a desire to join, to bond, to grow incorporate into something that will allow the poet to connect with Hallam. To recall, he says,

And gazing on thee, sullen tree,
Sick for thy stubborn hardihood,
I seem to fail from out my blood
And grow incorporate into thee. (2.13-16)

Desperate for the tree's "stubborn hardihood," the steadfast gloom of the sole object of perception, it is as if he becomes one with the tree, or he and the tree unite as one body. Tennyson's practice of adding paired sections to *In Memoriam*, in which one member thematically and formally revises the other, illuminates the poet's revision of his own emotional state, his attempt to accept sorrow, to understand that living through loss necessitates continuous reflection on, and reevaluation of, one's past. The addition of section 39 in 1870 brought the total number of sections in the poem to 131. Section 39 grew incorporate into both its partner and the poem, bringing a twenty-year process of revision to a close.

CODA*

“Points of Contact”: Blake and Whitman

The strongest and sweetest songs yet remain to be sung.
(Whitman, “A Backward Glance O’er Travl’d
Roads,” *Leaves of Grass* 1891-92)

On September 29, 1890 Whitman enclosed a rough sketch for his tomb in a letter to his literary executor, Richard Maurice Bucke. An outline of a house with a door is surrounded by design specifications: “Walt Whitman’s burial vault...on a sloping wooded hill...grey granite—unornamental...surroundings trees, turf, sky, a hill everything crude and natural” (*The Correspondence* 5: 95; sketch reproduced bet. 212-213). Whitman based the design on William Blake’s engraving “Death’s Door,” which he encountered in 1881 when he read Alexander Gilchrist’s *Life of William Blake*.¹²⁵ In “Death’s Door” an old, bearded man hunched over a crutch steps

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¹²⁵ Blake produced several versions of “Death’s Door”; Gilchrist’s *Life of William Blake* includes the version Blake etched for Robert Blair’s *The Grave* (1808) in both the 1863 edition (1: 224) and the 1880 edition (1: 269). For other versions see *America* 6, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* 21, and *The Notebook of William Blake* N16 and N17 (also the frontispiece to *Jerusalem*). See also Makdisi’s reading of *America* 6 in the context of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and the *Grave* illustrations as a “moment—no longer contained by or within even the multiple copies of *America*—that is always on the brink of happening...the young man will never actually emerge from his expectant crouch, and the old man will never actually find his way into the grave that awaits him, even though all the tempests of time are pushing him towards it” (184).

In “Chats with Walt Whitman” Gilchrist’s daughter, Grace, confirms that Whitman’s burial house is a “design he himself chose from Blake’s fine engraving of Death’s Door” (212). Alexander Gilchrist’s wife, Anne, is a particularly interesting point of contact between Blake and Whitman: she finished *Life of William Blake*, “*Pictor ignotus*” (1863), after her husband died suddenly in 1861; became enamored with Whitman after reading *Leaves of Grass* in 1869; published a defense of *Leaves of Grass* in an anonymous article entitled, “An Englishwoman’s Estimate of Walt Whitman” (*The Radical*, May 1870); corresponded with Whitman for six years before moving to Philadelphia (with three of her children) in 1876; and, from 1876 to 1878, became one of Whitman’s dearest friends.

inside the open doorway of a square, stone structure. The wind blows at the old man's back, rippling his garment and his beard; just inside the door is a rolled mat on a raised surface. As this dying physical body enters "Death's Door," a vibrant young man surrounded by rays of light crouches on top of the stone structure, representing the life of the soul.

Whitman's tomb is a compelling, material sign of connection between Blake and Whitman—two poets who printed and self-published multiple versions of poems that engage the imagination and grapple with issues of religion, sexuality, and politics. Here, I attempt to illuminate a material point of contact—Whitman's tomb—through a close reading of these poets' rhetorical points of contact. In order to understand the significance of Blake's presence at Whitman's tomb, this essay will explore Whitman's responses to Blake in his letters and notes, their shared status as prophetic poets, and the appearance of tropes of textual revision—contraction and expansion—in their works.

Swinburne's Idea of Resemblance

Whitman, who was eight years old when Blake died in 1827, was probably introduced to Blake's works in 1868, the year Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, *Poetical Sketches* and Algernon Charles Swinburne's book, *William Blake: A Critical Essay*, were published.¹²⁶ It is unclear when, or whether, Whitman read these books, but we do know that Moncure Conway, who reviewed *William Blake* in the *Fortnightly Review* (February 1868), made Whitman aware that Swinburne referred to him in his book. Whitman wrote to Conway,

¹²⁶ Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* and *Poetical Sketches* were published in 1868 by Pickering and edited by R.H. Shepherd.

I have not yet seen the February Fortnightly—nor the book William Blake—but shall procure & read both. I feel prepared in advance to render my cordial and admirant respect to Mr. Swinburne—and would be glad to have him know that I thank him heartily for the mention which, I understand, he has made of me in the Blake. (Conway, 1: bet. 218-219)¹²⁷

Swinburne more than mentions Whitman in *William Blake*: in his estimation, Blake and Whitman are uncannily similar. He writes,

I can remember one poet only whose work seems to me the same or similar in kind; a poet as vast in aim, as daring in detail, as unlike others, as coherent to himself, as strange without and as sane within. The points of contact and sides of likeness between William Blake and Walt Whitman are so many and so grave, as to afford some ground of reason to those who preach the transition of souls or transfusion of spirits. (300)

In an enthusiastic and flourishing prose style Swinburne goes on to identify these “sides of likeness” in extremely broad terms. For example, he writes: “The great American is not a more passionate preacher of sexual or political freedom than the English artist”; “The words of either strike deep and run wide and soar high”; and “The divine devotion and selfless love which make men martyrs and prophets are alike visible and palpable in each” (300-1). These proclamations of near identity go on for a few pages, and even though for Swinburne there is almost nothing that could be said of one poet which could not be said of the other, he admits that Whitman’s poetry is more accessible than Blake’s: “Whitman has seldom struck a note of thought and speech so just and so profound as Blake has now and then touched upon; but his work is

¹²⁷ I am indebted to Morton Paley’s “The Critical Reception of *A Critical Essay*” for this reference. Paley notes that Conway also “acted as the friendly intermediary in the correspondence that led to the first volume of Whitman’s poems to be published in England...edited by William Michael Rossetti, and published in 1868 by John Camden Hotten” (34). Swinburne dedicated *William Blake* to W. M. Rossetti.

generally more frank and fresh, smelling of sweeter air, and readier to expound or expose its message, than this of the ‘Prophetic Books’” (303).

Whitman’s friend, John Swinton, agreed with Swinburne and tested his claim: he read Blake’s poems aloud to friends and actually “passed them off” as Whitman’s. In a letter to William and Ellen O’Connor (September 1868), Whitman writes,

Swinton has lately been posting himself about William Blake, his poems—has the new London edition of W.B. in two vols. He, Swinton, gives me rather new information in one respect—says that the formal resemblance between several pieces of Blake, & my pieces, is so marked that he, S, has, with persons that partially know me, passed them off temporarily for mine, & read them aloud as such. He asked me pointedly whether I had not met with Blake’s productions in my youth, &c—said that Swinburne’s idea of resemblance &c was not so wild, after all. Quite funny, isn’t it? (*The Correspondence* 2: 48-9)¹²⁸

Swinton “pointedly” asked whether Whitman had previously “met with Blake’s productions,” and the absence of an answer here is particularly evasive, but not uncommon—Whitman’s sporadic and cursory comments about Blake typically refer more to himself, and none concerns Blake’s poetry specifically. William O’Connor replied consolingly that *Leaves of Grass* resembles Blake’s poetry as much as a “complex-melodied Italian opera, sung by voices half-human, half-divine” resembles “the Gregorian chant, bellowed by bull-necked priests with donkey lips” (*The Correspondence* 2: 49n). Whether we read Whitman’s question, “Quite funny, isn’t it?” ironically or not, it is clear that Whitman’s originality is at stake when people take Swinburne’s “idea of resemblance” seriously.

¹²⁸ Miller notes that the “two vols.” are Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* and *Poetical Sketches* (1868).

Whitman reveals his uneasiness with attempts to pair him and Blake more openly in a short note written around the same time Swinburne's *William Blake* was published:

Of William Blake & Walt Whitman. Both are mystics, extatics but the difference between them is this—and a vast difference it is: Blake's visions grow to be the rule, displace the normal condition, fill the field, spurn the visible, objective life, & seat the subjective spirit on an absolute throne, willful & uncontrolled. But Whitman, though he occasionally prances off, takes flight with an abandon & capriciousness of step or wing, and a rapidity & whirling power, which quite dizzy the reader in his first attempts to follow, always holds the mastery over himself, &, even in his most intoxicated lunges or pirouettes, never once loses control, or even equilibrium. To the pe[rfect] sense, it is evident that he goes off because he permits himself to do so, while ever the director, or direct'g principle sits coolly at hand, able to stop the wild teetotum & reduce it to order, at any a moment. In Walt Whitman, escapades of this sort are the exceptions. The main character of his poetry is the normal, the universal, the simple, the eternal platform of the best manly & womanly qualities. (*Faint Clews & Indirections* 53)

Here, he adopts the thin guise of a reviewer who is not Walt Whitman, and lays out the differences between Blake and Whitman in the assured diction of a literary critic. Though they may appear to be similar kinds of poets—"mystics, extatics"—he can tell the difference: Whitman is in control of his visions while Blake is not. Blake's visions lose sight of the "normal condition," ignore the "objective life," and turn the "subjective spirit" into a tyrant; Whitman, however, both authorizes and regulates his flights of fancy. Whitman's "escapades" are a dizzying dance, a performance balanced by a "direct'g principle" that is lacking in Blake's visions. Whitman-as-reviewer is also in control of Walt Whitman's poetic reception: this is what he wants the literary world to say about his relation to Blake. But we should not forget that

Whitman's desire to distinguish himself from Blake remained private—a note to, and for, himself.

Passionate Preachers

Notwithstanding Whitman's distinctions, the prophetic dimension of Blake and Whitman's poetry is perhaps their most familiar connection. Twentieth-century American poets Hart Crane and Allen Ginsberg first drew my attention to Blake and Whitman as prophetic poets: in Crane's *The Bridge*, Whitman is prominently featured in the "Cape Hatteras" section, and Blake provides the epigram for "The Tunnel" section; Ginsberg references Whitman formally, and Blake directly, in *Howl* when he talks about those "who passed through universities with radiant cool eyes hallucinating Arkansas and Blake-light tragedy among the scholars of war" (6). Ginsberg, of course, mentions Blake and Whitman in other poems, including "America," "Sunflower Sutra," and "Poem Rocket," in which he says, "Here I am naked without identity / with no more body than the fine black tracery of pen mark on soft paper / as star talks to star multiple beams of sunlight all the same myriad thought / in one fold of the universe where Whitman was / and Blake" (24-28).

Prophecy means to speak forth, before, or for, and prophetic writing attempts to communicate the divine voice through a textual vision. Blake writes in "All Religions are One" that the "Poetic Genius is the true Man" who is also "every where call'd the Spirit of Prophecy," and again in his annotations to the Bishop of Llandaff's *An Apology for the Bible* that the prophet "utters his opinions both of private & public matters."¹²⁹ Ian Balfour explains that Blake's view of prophecy is similar to that in Protestant discourse of the seventeenth

¹²⁹ *The Complete Poetry & Prose of William Blake* 1, 617.

century, like Jeremy Taylor's *The Liberty of Prophesying* (1647), in which prophecy "has more to do with freedom of expression or sheer speaking on behalf of God than with prediction of the future" (131).¹³⁰ In a similar vein in his Preface to *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman states that "the greatest poet" is "a seer" and "every man shall be his own priest."¹³¹ Biblical prophecy is especially important to both poets' works: among numerous examples, Isaiah and Ezekiel dine with the poet in Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and "All flesh is grass" (Isaiah 40:6) resonates throughout Whitman's verse. Blake's mythological system is fundamentally biblical and, working on the third (1860) edition of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman was involved in what he called "The Great Construction of the New Bible" (*Notebooks* 1:353).

That only a handful of essays on Blake and Whitman have been published (in the early 1980s) attests to the notion that their similarities are considered more a literary intuition than an avenue for critical exploration.¹³² However, both Malcolm Cowley and Donald Pease provide us with useful terms of comparison. In his Introduction to *Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass: The First (1855) Edition*, Cowley argues that Whitman's *Song of Myself* and Blake's illuminated works belong to a larger, prophetic canon that includes

¹³⁰ See Balfour's discussion of the intersection of the prophetic and the poetic in Blake in *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy* 127-136, esp. 135-6.

¹³¹ *Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass, The First (1855) Edition* 11, 22. All references to *Leaves of Grass* (1855) are from this edition, hereafter cited parenthetically by line number in my text.

¹³² Essays on Blake and Whitman include Donald Pease, "Blake, Whitman, Crane: The Hand of Fire," *William Blake and the Moderns* 15-38; Pease, "Blake, Crane, Whitman, and Modernism: A Poetics of Pure Possibility," *PMLA* 96.1 (1981): 64-85; Martin Bidney, "Structures of Perception in Blake and Whitman: Creative Contraries, Cosmic Body, Fourfold Vision," *ESQ* 28.1 (1982): 36-47; and Denise T. Askin, "Whitman's Theory of Evil: A Clue to His Use of Paradox," *ESQ* 28.2 (1982): 121-132.

works ranging from the *Bhagavad-Gita* to Rimbaud's *Illuminations*.¹³³ Within such a canon, works deeply concerned with cultural politics fall under the aegis of what Donald Pease calls "epic prophecies," or visions of "what is possible for a nation at a particular time in history" ("Blake, Whitman, Crane" 25). Both Blake's engraved continental prophecies, especially *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, *America*, *Europe*, and his unengraved *The French Revolution* can be considered alongside Whitman's writings on the Civil War, especially *Drum-Taps* and *Specimen Days*, the Independence Day publication of the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*, and the centennial 1876 *Leaves of Grass*.

The national and religious dimensions of Blake's poetic prophecy are markedly different from Whitman's. Several of Blake's poems tell the story of Orc, who represents "Revolution in the material world" (Damon 309). Blake's *America, A Prophecy* records the effect of the American Revolution on Europe: Orc breaks free from his chains (Los, his father has bound him to a mountain), war enters the world, and he is rebuked as an unholy agent of liberty. Here, as well as in the continuation of this tale in *Europe, A Prophecy*, the spiritual world is reflected in the material world. And revolution in the material world will always lose touch with its original meaning and fail, unless it is led by Jesus, who, for Blake, was the original spiritual revolutionary. Therefore, national liberty can only be achieved through a specifically Christian vision. According to S. Foster Damon, the final three chapters of *Jerusalem* (which signifies Liberty in Blake's mythological schema)—addressed to the Jews, the Deists, and the Christians—"analyze man's

¹³³ Cowley's list includes the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the *Upanishads*, Christopher Smart's *Jubilate Agno*, Blake's prophetic books, Rimbaud's *Illuminations*, and Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*—texts Whitman "could not have read, because they were not yet written, or not published, or not translated into English" (*Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass: The First (1855) Edition* xi).

progress through Experience until he reaches the Truth”: the Jewish religion is that of “Moral Law” and “the childhood of the human race”; the Deist religion is that of “young manhood [which] retains the Moral Law, but substitutes Nature for God”; and the Christian religion is that of “maturity...particularly plagued by the errors of sex—the false ideal of chastity” (210). Jerusalem is a prophetic vision of the true religion, which Man can achieve once he moves through these stages, eliminates all these errors, and embraces God within himself. In the introductory address in *Jerusalem*, “To the Public,” Blake expresses the hope that the reader will “be with” him, “wholly One in Jesus our Lord” (plate 3). To “be with” Blake, as his reader, is to unite with Jesus, to become part of the creative and illuminating process of the imagination, and ultimately recognize the divine and infinite within.¹³⁴

For Blake, an exclusively Christian vision of reunion with God must be adopted in order for humanity to be redeemed: the state of the nation depends on the spiritual state of its citizens and, ultimately, everyone is a citizen of Jerusalem. For Whitman, however, God is equal to, and exists in, everything:

I have said that the soul is not more than the body,
And I have said that the body is not more than the soul,
And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's-self is

(...)

I hear and behold God in every object, yet I understand God not
in the least,
Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful than
myself. (*Song of Myself* 1262-64, 1274-75)

¹³⁴ Blake also calls the reader into being in “To the Public” as “[lover] of books! [lover] of heaven!” With respect to “[lover]” under erasure, see *Jerusalem* copy 3, which bears the marks of Blake’s fraught relationship to his readers (*Jerusalem* 11).

Whitman's spiritual vision does not involve evolutionary stages of religion that lead to Christianity; rather, it includes all religions. In "Salut au Monde!" he hears "the Arab muezzin calling from the top of the mosque," "the Hebrew reading his records and psalms," "the rhythmic myths of the Greeks," "the tale of the divine life and bloody death of the beautiful God the Christ," and "the Hindoo teaching his favorite pupil" (*Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman* 288). Christ (Whitman does not refer to him as Jesus in *Leaves of Grass*) represents the ideal of brotherhood, of the love of another as one's self, or comradeship: "Young man, I think I know you—I think this face of yours is the face of the Christ himself, / Dead and divine and brother of all, here again he lies" ("A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim," *Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman* 441).¹³⁵ Whitman believes, like Blake, that humans are divine, but he also believes that they are equally as divine as God and such knowledge requires no mediation. Whitman's address to the reader in the Preface to *Song of Myself* is not expressed as a hope, but rather as a directive that does not include a specific religious reference: he says, "You shall stand by my side and look in the mirror with me" (13). Within this lateral structure of perception, both author and reader are reflected. Indeed, it is this imperative and necessary relationship between author and reader that Whitman's poem traces: the trajectory of *Song of Myself* moves from "I" to "you"—from "I celebrate myself" to "I stop somewhere waiting for **you**." Whitman's desire for, and performative declaration of, reciprocity takes place through the text in which we see both I and you. The state of the nation, according to Whitman, depends as much on the spiritual state of its citizens as it does on their citizenship in the human race.

¹³⁵ See also "The Base of all Metaphysics" and "Chanting the Square Deific" (*Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman* 275, 559-61).

Revisionary Poetics

Poetic revision in Blake and Whitman's poetry refers to their lifelong practice of revising their previously printed works. Tropes of the practice of revision—contraction and expansion—appear in both Blake's and Whitman's poetry: characters experience contraction and expansion through perception in Blake and through touch in Whitman. These characters in Blake's poetry are, of course, allegorical or mythic figures enacting a story, while in Whitman's poetry the subject is, as John Berryman puts it, a voice "for himself [and] for others *as himself*" (246). Blake's and Whitman's characters also experience a crisis of contraction. In Blake's *The Book of Urizen*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem*, characters become what they behold: contraction is a result of fallen perception, but such a state is actually necessary for imaginative expansion. In *Song of Myself*, the speaker overcomes the daybreak's threat to his expansion by becoming what he beholds through his vision and his voice. In both Blake and Whitman, then, subjects overcome (actual or potential) contraction by becoming what they behold in order to expand.

We should pause to recall that both poets produced multiple versions of their poems. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, each copy of one of Blake's poems is unique. Each copy of *The Book of Urizen*, for example, provides a particular view of the whole poem. Whitman also produced multiple editions of *Leaves of Grass* over more than thirty-five years, adding and excising poems, creating "clusters," changing titles, and adding supplements. For example, the 1855 edition contains twelve untitled poems; the 1856 edition contains thirty-two poems (with titles); the 1860 edition contains one hundred forty-six additional poems (grouped into clusters); and the 1881 edition contains final

cluster titles and final sequences of poems within clusters.¹³⁶ Unlike all the other poets we've looked at, Whitman clearly states his preference for the final edition of *Leaves of Grass*: at the beginning of the 1891-2 edition he writes, "As there are now several editions of L. of G., different texts and dates, I wish to say that I prefer and recommend this present one, complete for future printing, if there should be any" (*Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman* 148). Shortly before he died he issued a statement that the 1892 edition should "absolutely supercede all previous ones" (*Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman* 703).

To see how contraction and expansion figure in Blake, it is necessary to briefly rehearse the creation myth of Urizen. Let us recall that at the beginning of Chapter V, Los forged the chaotic and unorganized Urizen in physical form. He then perceived Urizen as a physically limited body separate from him. His contracted perception resulted in an anguishing division that produced a "round globe of blood / Trembling upon the Void" (12.58-9): he became the division and separation he beheld. Los continued "dividing & dividing"—pity both divides and reunites the soul (13.52-53). In theological terms, Pity (or Eve) makes possible Man's redemption through the figure of Jesus, in whom Blake's characters see "the Eternal Vision! the Divine Similitude!" at the end of *Jerusalem* (34[38].11). In Jesus, one can see both human and divine, and for Blake, this is the realization that expands our perception to include seeing the divine, or infinite in ourselves.

While the mythic characters in Blake's poems contract and expand through perception, Whitman, or a version of Whitman, in *Song of Myself*,

¹³⁶ Clusters are poems grouped together based on theme or idea, and a supplement is a group of poems published separately in a pamphlet with a title page and copyright (*Leaves of Grass: A Textual Variorum of the Printed Poems* I: xvi-xvii).

contracts and expands through touch. Whitman's lexicon of expansion is wide-ranging: for example, in *Song of Myself*, he "chant[s] a new chant of dilation" (428), he is "Partaker of influx and efflux," (462), and flies as "the fluid and swallowing soul" (799). It is also important to note that Whitman, as the subject of *Song of Myself*, is multiple: he incorporates "other" voices through (and as) his own. Ronald Beck explains that "At times the speaker seems to be a persona named Walt Whitman, at other times the voice of all mankind, at other times the voice of the mystical unity at the center of all being. Not only does the point of view shift, but it is often difficult to tell exactly when it shifts, and it is sometimes impossible to tell which voice is speaking" (35). The poet in *Song of Myself* expands into a kosmos: "Walt Whitman, an American, one of the roughs, a kosmos, / Disorderly fleshy and sensual" (499-500). "Many long dumb" and "forbidden voices" filter out through his expansive body, and then, in a moment reminiscent of Blake's "Human Form Divine" and his assertion that "every Minute Particular is Holy: / Embraces are Cominglings: From the Head even to the Feet," Whitman proclaims, "Divine I am inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am touched from" (*Jerusalem* 69.42-3; *Song of Myself* 526).¹³⁷ Whitman, as poet of the body and of the soul, figures the relationship between self and other in both physical and sacramental terms. He has "instant conductors" all over his body that "seize every object and lead it harmlessly" through him; he need only "press" with his fingers to be happy (614-16). But this touching, in which he "merely stirs," also limits Whitman's expansion: "To touch my person to some one else's is about as much as I can stand" (617). He continues, "Is this then a touch? . . . quivering me to a new

¹³⁷ Also see Blake's repeated assertion that "every thing that lives is holy" in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* 25, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* 8.10, *America* 8.13, and *The Four Zoas: Night the Second*, Page 34, line 80.

identity,” and an intensely visceral and sexual description of physical contact follows: “On all sides prurient provokers stiffening my limbs / Straining the udder of my heart for its withheld drip” (622-23).¹³⁸ His “fellow-senses” are personified as “sentries” who were “bribed to swap off with touch, and go and graze at the edges” of him (628-9). “Touch” has turned his other senses into traitors; he loses his wits and admits that he is “the greatest traitor” (637). When Whitman’s senses leave their posts, “villain touch” overwhelms him to the point where he can hardly breathe (639). Whitman acquiesces, “You are too much for me” (640).

In the middle of Whitman’s expansion and contraction, he experiences a crisis of contraction. Whitman beholds the daybreak, but before he can see the sun itself, he sees its rays: “Something I cannot see puts upward libidinous prongs, / Seas of bright juice suffuse heaven” (557-8). When he does see the sunrise, it threatens to annihilate him: “Dazzling and tremendous how quick the sunrise would kill me, / If I could not now and always send sunrise out of me” (562-3). The speaker circumvents the threat of potentially fatal contraction by becoming like the sun, by becoming what he beholds: “We also ascend dazzling and tremendous as the sun,” and the daybreak is suddenly “calm and cool” (564-5). Then, remarkably, the speaker sends the sunrise out of himself through his voice: “My voice goes after what my eyes cannot reach, / With the twirl of my tongue I encompass worlds and volumes of worlds” (566-7). Whitman becomes what he beholds through vision, and then reaches beyond

¹³⁸ For a discussion of this passage which opens up the possibility that Whitman’s poetry allows for the reader to speak prophetically, see Bertolini’s argument in “‘Hinting’ and ‘Reminding’: The Rhetoric of Performative Embodiment in *Leaves of Grass*” that the lyric persona tropes “his own thought, affect, and activity display[ing] modes of self-relation which are offered to the reader for a kind of subjective reinscription” and that we might read “Is this then a touch?” as a question “uttered with the reader’s tongue” (1067, 1071).

what he beholds through his voice, making expansion possible. Moreover, Whitman becomes what we behold: a sunrise whose rays reach us through his voice.

Death's Door of Perception

When Whitman read Gilchrist's *Life of Blake* in 1881, Blake was no longer a potentially threatening poetic rival. In a January letter to George and Susan Stafford he wrote that Gilchrist's two volumes "are queer books, the very finest of printing & paper & some odd pictures"; two weeks later he wrote, "though they are very queer in the story of Blake's life and works, there is a deal that is interesting & good to chew on—then they are such beautiful specimens of paper & printing, it is a pleasure to read them" (*The Correspondence* 3: 206, 208). Gilchrist's book succeeded in capturing Whitman's attention through both the story of Blake and the reproductions of his plates.¹³⁹ What finally drew Whitman to Blake was the *material beauty* of the book about Blake.

Whitman beheld Blake's "Death's Door" in Gilchrist's book and decided to use it as a model for his tomb. The inscription on the roof of Whitman's

¹³⁹ It seems even more likely that Whitman did not read Swinburne's *William Blake* when we consider that although Swinburne includes and discusses Blake's "pictures" and biography, Whitman does not comment on either until he reads Gilchrist's book in 1881. Swinburne refers widely to the first edition of Gilchrist's *Life of William Blake* (1863), discusses two engravings from Blair's *The Grave*, "The Reunion of the Soul & the Body" and "The Soul hovering over the Body reluctantly parting with Life" (56-58), but does not reproduce or specifically discuss "Death's Door," and includes nine facsimiles: the frontispiece is a reduction of *Jerusalem* 70; the title page is "A design of borders selected from those in *Jerusalem* (plates 5, 19, &c.) with minor details from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and *The Book of Thel*"; *The Book of Thel* title page (200); *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* title page (204); *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* 8 (208); *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* 20 (224); *Milton* 8 (258); *Jerusalem* 81 (276); and a reduction of *Jerusalem* 33[37]. Whitman briefly mentions Blake only once in his published works in *Good-Bye My Fancy* (1891) when he imagines that Blake's "half-mad vision...would have revell'd night or day, and beyond stint, in one of our American corn fields!" (*Prose Works* 1892, 2: 670).

tomb—simply, “Walt Whitman”—points to the immortality of the soul, represented by the shining young man atop the stone structure in Blake’s design. Whitman’s tomb is not only a version of Blake’s “Death’s Door,” it is also a door of perception for us, through which he has already passed.

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